Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe in the Era of Normalisation, 1969–1989

Edited by
Kevin McDermott · Matthew Stibbe

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Kevin McDermott wishes to dedicate this volume to John D. Morison (1937–2021), who taught him Russian and Czechoslovak history at Leeds University from 1975–1985 and thereafter remained a close friend and mentor

Contents

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pozdního socialismu, 1969–1989 (The Time of Fading: Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia under Late Socialism, 1969–1989) (Charles University Press, 2021).

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Abbreviations and Glossary of Terms

Action Programme	Reformist document adopted by KSČ in April 1968
aktiv	Meeting or group of party activists
apparatchik	Communist party-state official or bureaucrat
Brezhnev Doctrine	Soviet concept of limited sovereignty of communist parties/states
CC	Central Committee (leading organ of communist parties below Politburo level)
Charter 77	Human rights initiative launched in January 1977 (Czechoslovakia)
chata	Summer- or country-house/cottage (Czechoslovakia)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
Comecon	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
Cominform	Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties
'consolidation'	Term used by normalisers in the years 1969–1970
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
ČSM	Czechoslovak Union of Youth
ČSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (formal name and acronym adopted for the communist state in Czechoslovakia under the July 1960 constitution)
ČSSŽ	Czechoslovak Union of Women
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
glasnost	Gorbachev's policy of 'openness'

'January'	The spirit and memory of reform following the appointment of Alexander Dubček as KSČ First Secretary in January 1968
KGB	Committee for State Security (USSR)
Komsomol	Communist League of Youth (USSR)
KSČ	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
KSS	Communist Party of Slovakia
KV KSČ	Regional Committee of the KSČ
'Moscow Protocol'	Secret agreement between the leaders of the USSR and Czechoslovakia signed on 26 August 1968 inaugurating normalisation measures
Naše pravda	'Our Truth', KSČ daily newspaper in the town of Gottwaldov (Zlín)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Western military alliance founded in 1949
Neues Deutschland	'New Germany', SED daily newspaper
NF	National Front (body encompassing all Czechoslovak political, social and civil organisations)
nomenklatura	List of key appointments approved by the communist party
ONV	District National Committee (Czechoslovakia)
'Operation Danube'	Code-name for the Warsaw Pact military invasion of Czechoslovakia
OSChD	Union of Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship (USSR)
Ostpolitik	West German policy from the late 1960s of improving relations with the USSR, GDR and other East European socialist states
OV	District Committee (of the KSČ)
People's Militia	Armed wing of the KSČ
perestroika	Gorbachev's policy of 'reconstruction'
Politburo (or Presidium)	Highest decision-making body of communist parties
přestavba	Czech equivalent of *perestroika*
PRP	People's Republic of Poland
PZPR	Polish United Workers' Party
'real (existing) socialism'	Concept popularised in the Brezhnev years that denoted a developed, non-conflictual form of socialism on the road to communism
rezidentura	'Station' for foreign undercover operations
RFE	Radio Free Europe
ROH	Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Czechoslovakia)

Rudé právo	'Red Right', KSČ daily newspaper
samizdat	'Self-publishing' in the USSR and Eastern Europe
SČSP	Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship
SDR	Association of Collective Farmers (Czechoslovakia)
Secretariat	Apparatus for managing the daily affairs of communist parties
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (GDR)
SKJ	Yugoslav League of Communists
SNP	Slovak National Uprising, August 1944
'socialist realism'	Soviet artistic style depicting, and often subverting, existing reality in line with Marxist-Leninist ideology
Solidarność	'Solidarity', independent (non-communist) Polish trade union founded in 1980
SPD	Social Democratic Party (West Germany)
Stasi	East German secret police
StB	State Security (Czechoslovakia; federal command)
ŠtB	Slovak branch of the StB
Tuzex	Foreign currency retail outlets (Czechoslovakia)
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)
VB	Public Security (Czechoslovakia)
VONS	Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted (Czechoslovakia)
Warsaw Pact	Soviet-led military organisation founded in 1955
ZPS	State-owned machine tool works in Gottwaldov (Zlín)

Leading Czechoslovak and East European Communists, 1968–1989

Czechoslovakia

Bil'ak, Vasil	hard-line normaliser
Černík, Oldřich	reformer; Czechoslovak Prime Minister, 1968–1970
Císař, Čestmír	reformer
Dubček, Alexander	reformer; KSČ First Secretary, 1968–1969
Hájek, Jiří	reformer
Husák, Gustáv	normaliser; KSČ First Secretary, 1969–1987; President of Czechoslovakia, 1975–1989
Indra, Alois	hard-line normaliser
Jakeš, Miloš	normaliser; KSČ General Secretary, 1987–1989
Kapek, Antonín	hard-line normaliser
Kaska, Radko	hard-line normaliser, Federal Minister of Interior, 1970–1973
Kempný, Josef	normaliser
Kriegel, František	reformer
Novotný, Antonín	KSČ First Secretary, 1953–1968; President of Czechoslovakia, 1957–1968
Pelnář, Jan	normaliser, Federal Minister of Interior, 1968–1970
Šik, Ota	reformer
Smrkovský, Josef	reformer
Štrougal, Lubomír	normaliser; Czechoslovak Prime Minister, 1970–1988
Svoboda, Ludvík	President of Czechoslovakia, 1968–1975
Urbánek, Karel	KSČ General Secretary, November-December 1989

East Germany

Honecker, Erich	SED General Secretary, 1971–1989

Mielke, Erich	Minister of State Security, 1957–1989 and SED Politburo member, 1971–1989
Ulbricht, Walter	SED First Secretary, 1946–1971

Hungary

Kádár, János	General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1956–1988

Poland

Gierek, Edward	PZPR First Secretary, 1970–1980
Gomułka, Władysław	PZPR First Secretary, 1956–1970
Jaruzelski, Wojciech	PZPR First Secretary, 1981–1989
Kania, Stanisław	PZPR First Secretary, 1980–1981
Milewski, Mirosław	Deputy Minister of Interior from 1971, and Minister of Interior, 1980–1981

Soviet Union

Andropov, Yuri	CPSU General Secretary, 1982–1984
Brezhnev, Leonid	CPSU General Secretary, 1964–1982
Chernenko, Konstantin	CPSU General Secretary, 1984–1985
Gorbachev, Mikhail	CPSU General Secretary, 1985–1991
Khrushchev, Nikita	CPSU First Secretary, 1953–1964

Yugoslavia

Marković, Ante	Croat politician and last Prime Minister of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 1989–1991
Tito, Josip Broz	Leader of Yugoslav League of Communists, 1939–1980

A Note on Czech Pronunciation

á	long a
c	ts as in bits
č	ch as in church
ch	ch as in loch
ě	ye as in year
j	always soft y sound
ř	unique sound, equivalent to 'rzh'
š	sh as in shoe
ů	oo as in doom
ý	long ee sound
ž	zh as in pleasure

Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe in the Era of Normalisation

Matthew Stibbe and Kevin McDermott

In his underground satirical novel *The Trial Begins*, illegally brought out to the West in the late 1950s and set in 1952–1953, the dissident Soviet intellectual Andrei Sinyavsky (pseudonym Abram Tertz) allowed his unnamed first-person narrator to recount the ordeal of Vladimir Globov, chief public prosecutor under a by now seriously ailing Stalin. Globov has many problems. He is due to conduct the trial of a Jewish doctor, Rabinovich, who is accused of performing unauthorised abortions, but it turns out that one of Rabinovich's patients was Globov's second wife, who no longer wants to have children with him because she has lost her faith in the future of socialism. Meanwhile, his son from his first marriage, the history student Seryozha, is spouting forbidden views about a supposed 'purer' form of communism, views that will eventually lead to his arrest as a supposed agent of the counter-revolution. The point of the story is that there is no way out for Globov that can be convincingly captured within the literary culture of socialist realism, no decisions he can make and no

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1

journey of discovery that he could go on that would reveal the rational, humane core of the Soviet system. Instead, in order to escape his dilemmas he takes refuge in the utopian aspects of communism and in the (to him reassuring, but to the reader utterly grotesque) belief that the end would justify all means. He tells his son:

> Study your history but don't forget the present day. Think of what we're building! Think of what we have achieved already!—well, there you are—in the final reckoning if you see what I mean—ultimately—our ancestors were right. What they did was just.[1]

At his trial, alongside Yuli Daniel, for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, held in Moscow in February 1966 after his true identity as Abram Tertz had been uncovered by the KGB, Sinyavsky insisted that *The Trial Begins* was a 'literary work, not a political document'. As he told the court, he had used the devise of an imaginary first-person narrator to conjure up 'the mixture of fear and exaltation' in the USSR during the short period between the Doctors' Plot and Stalin's death, and again, three years later, in 1956, not to 'depict historical reality' as it actually was.[2] Needless to say, he was found guilty and sentenced to seven years in a prison camp. In 1973 he was granted permission to emigrate to France.[3]

   Sinyavsky's case is interesting because it tells us something about the difference between the pre- and post-1968 eras in the Soviet bloc. Before 1968 it was still possible to claim that communism was an ideal worth fighting for, even though its living present had somehow been perverted by Stalinism. This, after all, was the view of Globov's son, Seryozha. In the epilogue to *The Trial Begins*, Seryozha is depicted in 1956 alongside Rabinovich and the unnamed narrator. They are digging a ditch in a camp in Kolyma in Russia's Far East, at a time when Khrushchev's amnesties 'had virtually emptied the [Gulag] of its inmates' and 'only some ten thousand of us, dangerous criminals, were [still] left'.[4] Seryozha's idealistic, libertarian socialist views indeed make him exceptionally dangerous to the Soviet state, but on the other hand he is still alive, still living in the present and still shaping his own reality around his historical and literary 'finds'. A decade or so later, something of this utopian-artistic spirit was captured in the Czech writer Ludvík Vaculík's 'Two Thousand Words Manifesto', published at the height of the Prague Spring. Vaculík still endorsed socialism as a worthy 'program' for the Czechoslovak nation but

noted that its headlong pursuit by force rather than democratic consent had placed power 'into the hands of the wrong people'.[5]

After 1968–1969, however, there could no longer be any belief in a 'purer' communism. The 'utopian urge', and with it the 'importance of culture' to politics, died with the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968 and the removal of Alexander Dubček from office in April 1969.[6] 'Normalisation' in Czechoslovakia was intended to trump literary imagination not with feelings of terror or exaltation in face of 'The Master' (Stalin), but with more 'static, sterile and stable forms' of repression, as Václav Havel put it in his famous *samizdat* essay, 'The Power of the Powerless', written in October 1978.[7] In other words, the 'far-reaching political change' that the fictitious Seryozha yearned for was not just postponed for another decade or another generation, but cancelled forever— or rendered 'utterly unforeseeable', to use Havel's words.[8] Meanwhile the present was something to forget, whether through laughter and absurdist comedy, through regular escape into the virtual capitalist world portrayed by Western film and television, or through 'opportunistic' withdrawal into the private realm of personal relationships and niche intellectual friendships.[9] Unlike the past, the present was not something that could be commemorated or condemned as if it were still a real living thing. Quite simply, it was dead, or if not dead, then, to borrow the words of Timothy Garton Ash, buried deep 'under ice', restricted to almost wholly invisible activity 'on the underside', and capable of being brought to the surface only 'if… a real thaw comes'.[10] Above all, to cite a metaphor unpicked by Miroslav Vaněk in his contribution to this volume, the normalisation period was characterised both at the time and afterwards by the colour 'grey', in order to contrast it negatively with the 'golden' 1960s and the 'colourful' 1990s.

This, at least, was how many dissident East European intellectuals saw things from their position in the 'shadow world' that existed outside of and in conflict with the official structures.[11] It is also how many young leftists in the West, successors to the '1968 generation', viewed the normalised communist regimes of the 1970s and 1980s. The German writers Heinz Bude, Bettina Munk and Karin Wieland, for instance, who were active in the house squatting movement in the Kreuzberg district of West Berlin from 1980 onwards, remembered of that time:

> We were okay with the Wall. It calmed the traffic, formed alcoves, and anything that lay in its shadow that could not be used was left abandoned as

empty land. As true Berliners we no longer bothered to climb up on the wooden viewing platforms. We blotted the other side out. Beyond East Berlin with its long, silent, yellow-lit streets beckoned the gigantic vastness of the East. [And] when the cold wind that blew over from there was particularly chilly, we felt as though Siberia was near.[12]

In the early part of the Cold War, rising German/European politicians like Willy Brandt had still refused to accept the 'normality' of Soviet domination behind the Iron Curtain, asserting instead that historically and culturally, 'Berlin lies on the [River] Spree and not in Siberia'.[13] However, this was worlds apart from the view presented by West Berlin-based author and '1968er' Peter Schneider in his 1982 novel *The Wall Jumper* (*Der Mauerspringer*). In Schneider's critical take on the political imaginary of the West, the 'East' had become a mere figure of speech, a by-word for a 'detested social order', rather than a real place with a pulsating heart: 'Life there didn't differ simply in outward organization; it obeyed another law'.[14] Indeed, it was in the twenty years following the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia that the peripheralising view of the communist East as 'The Other Europe' or the 'last colonial empire still in existence', as the Prague-born French political scientist Jacques Rupnik argued in a 1988 book of the same title, really began to take hold.[15] To reinforce this point, Rupnik quoted from a much-read piece in the *New York Review of Books* written by the exiled Czech author Milan Kundera in 1984. 'Europe', bemoaned Kundera from the relative comfort of his new post-1975 home in France, 'has not noticed the disappearance of its [Central European] cultural home because it no longer perceives its unity as a cultural unity'.[16]

Yet it may also be worth developing new, less starkly binary perspectives on the post-1969 Soviet bloc and asking what was happening above the ice, the place where, according to Vaněk, 'the remaining 98 per cent of the population' who were not intellectuals or dissidents lived. In the cold and often unstimulating, but nonetheless eminently habitable spaces created by Eastern Europe's post-totalitarian communist rulers, we argue, there was still a present, or rather multiple presents, in the 1970s and early 1980s. Siberia was in fact still thousands of miles away in a cultural as well as geographical sense. Thus, as Jan Mervart explains in his chapter in the volume, the many inconsistencies in the 'normalised' party's conception of Leninist ideas about form and content did create spaces for genuine artistic creativity and a limited but still palpable degree of pluralism. Particularly for younger artists who had experienced neither 1950s

Stalinism nor 1960s post-Stalinism, Husák's 'real existing socialism' could seem more like an opportunity than a threat. And although ordinary Czechs and Slovaks did experience many aspects of everyday life in the normalisation period as absurd, alienating and lacking in colour, they were also able to find alternative meanings, multiple shades of grey, and more rational, if mundane, ways of interacting with the system, as other contributions to the collection demonstrate. Vítězslav Sommer, for example, shows how dissatisfaction with shortages, corruption and environmental pollution was communicated and mediated via various party and non-party institutions at local level through taking the example of the once buoyant industrial and shoe-manufacturing town of Gottwaldov (Zlín) in eastern Moravia. And Celia Donert adds to this by emphasising in her chapter that the conservative family and gender norms of the last twenty years of communist rule were not just imposed 'from above', but negotiated from below, leading to a continuous redrawing of the dividing line between the 'private' and 'public' lives of citizens.

It is the purpose of this volume to uncover these more nuanced meanings and to understand their significance for the practice, experience and memory of communist rule in Czechoslovakia itself and in the wider Soviet bloc. By what means, we ask, and with what degree of success was Czechoslovakia returned to a 'normal' communist state in line with Soviet orthodoxy in the period after 1969? What role was played by the party, ideology and the security state? How important were Slovak developments, family and gender issues, cultural production, and everyday life and popular opinion? How do the chapters on the Nymburk and Gottwaldov regions by James Krapfl and Sommer illuminate the multi-dimensional and complex processes of normalisation and 'auto-normalisation' beyond the major cities? And finally what was the significance of Czechoslovakia's political relations and cultural exchanges with the USSR, the GDR, Poland and Yugoslavia?

Cultural and Political Influences from the 1950s and 1960s and their Forgotten Legacy for the Husák Regime

The essays contained in the volume offer a more diverse set of interpretations than conventional Western-centric and teleological narratives of the gradual re-emergence of civil society after decades spent 'under the ice'.

They demonstrate that in the 1970s and early 1980s, alternative national, regional and global futures for Czechoslovakia and Eastern Europe were still possible to imagine, futures that did not necessarily entail the paths taken after 1985, let alone after 1989.[17] If a model civil society, able to make a clear break with the communist establishment, did not even exist by the time that Eastern Europe arrived at the *annus mirabilis* of 1989, as Stephen Kotkin has claimed,[18] then it becomes even more important to avoid imposing normative, black and white assumptions when it comes to analysing social processes and experiences in the 1970s and early 1980s. Normalisation meant diverse things to diverse sets of people, whether they were resident within Czechoslovakia's borders or whether they lived across those borders. It shaped the lives of hundreds of thousands of party and state officials and millions of ordinary citizens and brought forth new forms of accommodation—not all of them springing from 'uncivil' motives—as well as dissent and opposition, not all of which was 'civil', pro-Western or liberalising in nature. It certainly closed down prospects and narrowed horizons for some, but it also opened up fresh possibilities, including for transnational exchange of ideas and experiences and reciprocal cultural contacts, for others.

Our approach is in part influenced by recent histories of Cold War Eastern Europe that have challenged the idea that the political independence and cultural identity of this region was simply 'crushed' by the post-1944/1945 Soviet drive for domination and total subjugation and only set free again in 1989.[19] As studies by Norman Naimark, John Connelly and Peter Kenez, among others, have shown, even in the late 1940s and early 1950s the Eastern bloc countries were allowed some space for the development of cultural (if not political) expressions of autonomy.[20] European leaders after the Second World War, including communist ones, were conscious of their own agency and of the salience of the question of sovereignty. Already in the 1960s they were 'globally engaged', developing contacts in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia in a world order that was being rapidly reshaped by decolonisation and new forms of anti-imperialism.[21] The line they took in domestic affairs also mattered. In their dealings with the Soviet Union, they were able to take advantage of particular historical traditions in, and the unique geopolitical/strategic position of, their respective nations.[22] This was more evident still following Stalin's death in 1953 and the gradual emergence of Khrushchev as his successor. 'Proletarian internationalism' was no longer narrowly defined as love for the Soviet Union as the

supposed 'liberator' of all nations but could now embrace patriotic (and not just 'realist') forms of socialism in line with nationally-inflected, pre-1945 histories and traditions. In late 1950s Hungary, for example, the government of János Kádár, while denouncing the anti-Soviet insurgents of 1956 as 'fascists' and 'murderers', allowed the rehabilitation of the hitherto largely forgotten post-First World War 'Councils Republic' under the ultra-left Bolshevik leader Béla Kun. Within the space of a few short years, the 133-day 'red' reign of terror in Hungary from March to August 1919 went from being a taboo subject, not least for Stalinists who did not want to dwell on Kun's execution during the Soviet show trials of the 1930s, to a celebrated event that became firmly rooted in the nation's (and not just the Communist Party's) revolutionary past.[23]

By the 1960s, according to Maciej Górny, well-developed national historiographies (including of art and literature as well as state institutions) had come to replace slavish imitations of the Soviet model in other Eastern bloc countries too.[24] At the end of that decade, Czechoslovakia itself had two communist leaders in a row—Dubček and then Husák—who were not only from the Slovak half of the country, but were generally sympathetic towards its claims for greater cultural, and to some extent, national autonomy. Some of this survived into the 1970s and helped to boost support for the normalisation process as a means of maintaining socialist political control while meeting legitimate claims for economic and cultural equality between nations, as Adam Hudek shows in his contribution to this volume. In order to advance socialist ideas in the post-Stalinist era, it was deemed necessary to allow nationally-distinct 'historical narratives, rhetoric, style, [and] strategies of argumentation' to (re-)emerge, albeit while staying broadly within the framework of Marxism-Leninism.[25] This could be seen especially in the production of new textbooks for use in schools and universities. Other cultural items, including modern film and literature, popular songs, consumer products, youth tourism and public understandings of 'hooliganism', crossed borders within the Eastern bloc and allied socialist countries such as Fidel Castro's Cuba and Ho Chi Minh's North Vietnam, and did so in a much more open and extensive manner in the 1960s when compared to the 1950s. In particular, the traffic was no longer just one way, from Moscow to its satellites; rather, multilateral forms of cultural exchange and transfer within and beyond the 'second world' were now firmly on the agenda.[26]

In the sphere of Warsaw Pact diplomacy too, as Laurien Crump proposes, the period after 1955, and especially after 1960, witnessed a

'paradigm shift' towards greater pluralism, with the six non-Soviet members of that alliance able to act increasingly as respected junior partners rather than mere puppets.[27] Each one was able to develop particular, and at times maverick, perspectives on issues such as the German question, the Sino-Soviet split, the Vietnam war, nuclear non-proliferation, the Arab-Israeli conflict and (in the case of Romania and to a lesser extent Hungary) even on the Prague Spring. The year 1968 was clearly something of an exception, at least as far as the five-nation march into Czechoslovakia is concerned. Certainly, there was to be no emancipation from Soviet-style communism for the peoples of Eastern Europe until the late 1980s; before then, they remained firmly within the Kremlin's orbit. Nonetheless, as Rachel Applebaum has shown specifically in the case of Czechoslovakia, the unequal relations of power between Moscow and other Eastern Bloc countries did not rule out the development of overlapping and durable understandings of socialist internationalism and the forging of genuine friendships at all levels of political, economic and cultural inter-change.[28] For instance, the liberalising effects of several years of relatively open travel arrangements for young people and migrant workers across the Czechoslovak-Polish border were arguably brought to a head in the early weeks of the Prague Spring, when students at the University of Warsaw—protesting against the increasingly authoritarian and anti-Semitic direction of their own government under the once reforming party leader Władysław Gomułka—reportedly chanted: 'Poland awaits her own Dubček!'.[29] When they were beaten up by the Polish security police and members of 'workers' militias', this was seen in many parts of Europe and across the ideological frontiers of the Cold War as a deliberate attack on efforts to create a more humane version of socialism.

To take another example, student organisations in Yugoslavia publicly expressed their outrage that 'today, in a socialist country, it is possible to tolerate anti-Semitic attacks' and to use 'such undemocratic means' to solve 'internal conflicts'. Poland, they claimed, was now a country where 'Marxist thought is persecuted', a reference to the imprisonment of opposition left-wing intellectuals Jacek Kuroń and Karol Modzelewski in particular.[30] Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, had since the mid-1960s become a beacon of hope, a sign that a mutually-created, free and equal socialist world beyond the straightjacket of Soviet power politics and militarism might still be within reach—even for Soviet citizens themselves.[31] These transnational hopes did not simply disappear after 1968–1969, although they did take on new forms. Meanwhile, at a more local level, the

border regions between the ČSSR and Poland, and between the Czech lands and the GDR, were themselves sites of increased social contacts in the run up to 1968 which, at least indirectly, also threatened exclusively national or state-bureaucratic visions of communism and its future development.[32] And at the opposite end of a very long political spectrum, neo-Stalinist critics of the Prague Spring inside Czechoslovakia also sought out connections with like-minded figures and movements not only in their own country, but across the border with Poland and throughout the Soviet bloc.[33] In other words—and to quote Rachel Applebaum again—while national frameworks remained important from the mid-1960s onwards, particularly for oppositional writers and intellectuals and in some cases even for regime-loyal cultural functionaries, it is important to recognise that East European citizens during the communist era 'share[d] a "common world"—a world they built together'.[34] This applies regardless of where they stood politically on issues such as the Prague Spring, Czechoslovak federalisation, the Brezhnev doctrine or the meaning of 'socialist internationalism'.

Our aim in this volume is to apply these insights, drawn mainly from studies of the pre-1969 period, to the far less well understood 1970s and early 1980s. We wish to challenge, or at least nuance, commonplace assumptions about the normalisation period, in particular the Garton Ash metaphor about the political aims of 1968 having simply been 'frozen into immobility' or buried under 'a thick layer of ice' before the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika* after 1985.[35] For the last three-and-a-half decades, this standard trope has dominated Western historiography to the exclusion of more sophisticated understandings. As recently as 2018, for instance, British historian Sir Ian Kershaw, with a direct nod to Garton Ash, wrote in his masterful account of Europe since 1950:

> In Czechoslovakia, far more than was the case in the GDR or Bulgaria (not to mention Romania), the advent of Gorbachev opened up the gulf between the regime and wide sectors of the population (above all intellectuals)—a breach that had never been healed, even if not openly apparent, since the crushing of the Prague Spring in August 1968... Political stability had been sustained by ritual conformity of the many, ruthless repression, and surveillance of the dissenting minority. But persecution had failed to silence the dissidents completely.[36]

And in her 2020 biography of Václav Havel's British playwright friend Tom Stoppard, literary critic Hermione Lee made the same point in even starker terms. All we need to know about the 'puppet' Husák regime in the 1970s and early 1980s, she wrote, is that it 'presided over a society coloured by fear, apathy and suspicion', leaving citizens with no other option but to 'tr[y] to get on with their lives by keeping their heads down'.[37]

The problem with this interpretation, we would argue, does not lie in what Kershaw, Lee (and others) say about the small number of outright dissidents, but in what they fail to say about the bulk of ordinary Czechs and Slovaks for whom 'ritual conformity' or 'keeping their heads down' could have multiple meanings, depending on shifting personal and political priorities and changing local, national and transnational contexts. Thomas Lindenberger's notion of 'Eigen-Sinn' (self-will), which he applies to understanding the often obstinately self-interested behaviour of East German citizens towards the centralised party-state in the GDR, is also relevant, we maintain, to reading Czechoslovak society after 1953 and again after 1969. Here too post-Stalinist dictatorial methods had their limits, and the communist regime typically had to secure its (slender/transient/fragile) legitimacy through complex forms of negotiation and persuasion rather than relying on straightforward societal obedience towards police and governmental authority.[38] Politics, in other words, was not frozen. Indeed, as an alternative to the 'under the ice' metaphor, we would point to some surprising affinities with American society in the 1830s and 1840s, an era when 'the people' were already the unignorable subjects of history but not yet its sovereign creators, its movers and shakers, and also an era in which talk of revolution, or sudden, violent political change, was rare. Of American citizens at that time, the French aristocrat and political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville wrote:

> …whatever profession [they] may embrace and whatever species of property they may possess, one characteristic is common to them all. No one is fully contented with his present fortune; all are perpetually striving, in a thousand ways, to improve it. Consider any one of them at any period of his life, and he will be found engaged with some new project for the purpose of increasing what he has… Violent political passions have but little hold on [them]… The ardour that they display in small matters calms their zeal for momentous undertakings.[39]

With the one obvious and short-lived exception of the Solidarity movement in Poland in 1980–1981, this description might equally well apply to East European citizens in the 1970s and early 1980s. Before we pursue this line of argument any further, however, and before we integrate it into our broader interpretations of normalisation, it is first essential to appraise normalisation in its domestic Czechoslovak guise. This can only be done by looking at the traumatic events of the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968.

The Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact Invasion, January–August 1968

The Prague Spring was a bold experiment in the midst of the Cold War to elaborate a historic 'Third Way': a form of democratic socialism distinct from Western liberal capitalism on the one hand and the rigid norms of Soviet Marxism-Leninism on the other. It was a peaceful attempt by Czechoslovak reform communists to democratise, modernise and thus legitimise the existing system under the potent slogan 'socialism with a human face'.[40] For leading reformers, the innovations had definite limits—they represented precisely 'democratisation', not a conscious route to a fully-fledged 'democracy'. Their architects, after all, were communists, not liberals. This difficult and contradictory process began in earnest after the appointment of the forty-six-year-old Slovak Alexander Dubček as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (*Komunistická strana Československa*—KSČ) on 5 January 1968 and was brutally curtailed eight months later by Soviet-led Warsaw Pact tanks. Dubček was not a radical reformer, but he soon became the personification of the Prague Spring, a 'heroic', almost mythologised figure. We do not have sufficient space here to discuss the origins of the Prague Spring in any detail, but suffice it to say that five inter-related factors in the crisis of Czechoslovak communism culminated in the events of 1968: economic stagnation beginning in 1962–1963 and the piecemeal efforts to overcome it; long-standing tensions between Czechs and Slovaks; the over-centralisation of power; cultural ferment and disaffection among intellectuals and students; and a widespread moral belief in the rule of law over the rule of fear. These corrosive issues crystallised in the course of 1967, producing deep and bitter divisions in the party leadership and society.

What actually occurred in Czechoslovakia between January and August 1968 that aroused the wrath of Soviet and other East European leaders? First and foremost was the highly controversial and unprecedented decision in early March to abolish primary censorship of the mass media. Almost immediately state-run television, radio and newspapers began to discuss a host of hitherto taboo subjects, including radical proposals for a future multi-party system and Soviet involvement in the judicial crimes of the Stalinist era. By the summer, the Kremlin was accusing the Dubček leadership of permitting the publication of outright anti-Soviet articles and cartoons. Several other initiatives tore at the heart of Moscow's ingrained conceptions of the socialist order: the founding of non-communist, potentially anti-communist, political groupings; the demotion of loyal pro-Soviet party, state and security officials and their replacement by untested reformers; the likelihood of formal recognition of the rights of minority factions inside the KSČ, seriously undermining the Leninist ideological canon of 'democratic centralism'; the moves to circumscribe the vast powers of the secret services; the extensive political and civil rehabilitation of many thousands of victims of Stalinist illegalities; the mooted military reforms that could subvert the unity and coordination of the Warsaw Pact; the perceived shift to a more neutral foreign policy, epitomised by improved links with the (West) German Federal Republic; the erosion of political trust between the Czechoslovak and Soviet leaders, notably Dubček and Brezhnev;[41] and, not least, the activation of a spontaneous and unpredictable actor in the form of popular opinion and an embryonic civil society, which threatened to push the reforms way beyond the limits set by party and governmental authorities. The crucial dilemma for KSČ reformers was how to democratise public life and involve citizens in the management of the state *without* jeopardising the party's monopoly of power. It is fair to say that, unsurprisingly, no adequate solution to this conundrum was found during the short eight months of the Prague Spring.

Ultimately, however, it was the Soviets' profound geopolitical fears that underlay their decision to intervene militarily on the night of 20–21 August 1968. For did not the logic of a democratised system and an open mass media in Czechoslovakia signify the emergence of 'anti-socialist counter-revolutionary forces' both inside and outside the Communist Party? If so, could Dubček or any successor be relied on to overcome the 'rightist elements' and maintain the party's leading role in the future? If not, surely Czechoslovakia would be 'lost' to socialism and the threat of

'spill-over' to other East European socialist states, including the USSR itself, would be palpable? If so, would not the cohesion and unity of the entire Soviet bloc be plunged into turmoil, the inviolable gains of the Second World War be forsaken and the historic struggle between 'socialism' and 'capitalism' end in victory for the latter? The stakes were thus extremely high.

'Operation Danube', the codename for the largest deployment of armed force in Europe since World War II, was militarily competent, but politically seriously misjudged. The Soviet plan was that the overwhelming show of strength would rapidly pacify the population, Dubček and other prominent reformers would be replaced by pro-Moscow 'healthy forces', led by Vasil Bil'ak and Alois Indra, who together with three other hardliners had written the infamous 'Letter of Invitation' requesting Soviet 'fraternal assistance', and a so-called 'revolutionary government of workers and peasants' would be formed to bring Czechoslovakia back into the communist fold. In the event, the occupation was almost universally condemned by both the party and people and met with mass passive resistance. The KSČ Presidium voted seven to four against the machinations of the Bil'ak-Indra group, who were popularly regarded as traitors, whereupon the Kremlin had to improvise and transport Dubček and the entire Czechoslovak party leadership to the USSR to 'negotiate' what became known as the 'Moscow Protocol'. Under the terms of this enforced secret agreement signed on 26 August, key aspects of 'normalisation' were adumbrated: functionaries who acted against the leading role of the KSČ were to be removed; full party control over the media was to be restored and 'anti-socialist' clubs and organisations closed down; the fervently pro-reform Extraordinary 14th Party Congress, which had convened clandestinely in Prague on 22 August, was declared null and void; and Warsaw Pact troops were to remain on Czechoslovak territory until 'the threat to socialism' had been 'eliminated'.[42] The Soviets also made it clear that several radical reformers, soon to be dubbed 'counter-revolutionary rightists', had to be rapidly dismissed from their positions of power. However, a few concessions were secured. Most significantly, it was accepted that Dubček and other leading moderate reformers would, temporarily at least, remain in office to oversee the implementation of the Protocol and initiate the early phase of normalisation.

In the fluid months after the invasion, Dubček was in a deeply invidious position. He speculated that once Czechoslovak politics and society had been 'consolidated', largely in line with Soviet expectations, aspects of the

Prague Spring reforms could be salvaged, and Moscow might be per-suaded to recall the occupying Warsaw Pact forces. The strategy was not entirely misguided. As Krapfl and Sommer demonstrate in their contribu-tions to this volume, from autumn 1968 to well into 1969, political, social and cultural life remained deeply contested with recalcitrant reformers, intellectuals, students and many industrial workers fighting a losing battle against the encroachments of the burgeoning pro-Soviet and 'realist' fac-tions. However, by their prevarications, willingness to jettison like-minded comrades and acceptance of piecemeal measures reversing virtually all the post-January innovations, Dubček and other prominent reformers like Prime Minister Oldřich Černík played a crucial role in the post-invasion 'pacification' process. In sum, early normalisation was both highly con-tested and, in its later stages, an unedifying spectacle of reluctant retreat and compromise which served to disarm, disorient and dismay the vast bulk of Czechs and Slovaks and thereby blunt popular resistance to the occupation. 'Realism'—a growing recognition that Soviet demands had to be met if worse was not to befall the country—gradually prevailed over principled defiance.

To be sure, significant acts of opposition such as Jan Palach's tragic self-immolation in January 1969, widespread anti-Soviet protests after Czechoslovakia symbolically defeated the USSR twice in the world ice hockey championships in March, and violently suppressed demonstrations marking the first anniversary of the invasion in August continued to rock the political establishment. But the unintended outcome of this perceived 'chaos' was that many vacillating party reformers and centrists began to seek a new firm style of leadership, epitomised by the power-hungry Slovak party leader Gustáv Husák, to extricate the country from the on-going political and social malaise. In this toxic atmosphere, an anti-Dubček coalition in the KSČ elite had coalesced by early spring 1969, the *coup de grâce* occurring at the Central Committee plenum on 17 April. Here, the overwhelming majority of delegates abjectly voted to accept Dubček's res-ignation and replace him as First Secretary by Husák. The latter's great attribute was that he successfully portrayed himself as a 'pragmatist', a man of action, a forceful 'anti-Stalinist' who had been persecuted in the 1950s, had supported many of the reforms of 1968 and hence could bring cohe-sion to a bitterly divided party and society that yearned for stability after months of crisis fatigue. He had also become 'Moscow's choice': normali-sation was about to begin in earnest.

Normalisation: Meanings and Interpretations

It is no easy task to define the term 'normalisation', not least because it signified different things to different actors, altered its meaning over time and begs the perplexing question: what is a 'normal' communist system? That said, conventionally, normalisation (*normalizace* in Czech; *normalizácia* in Slovak) has been construed as the attempt by hard-line pro-Soviet Czechoslovak communists to reconstruct the *status quo ante*, a supremely retrograde undertaking designed to wipe the Dubčekite reforms of 1968 and the 'spirit of January' from the two nations' collective memory. As several of our contributors make clear, normalisers insisted on the reinforcement of the party's leading role in politics and society, the removal of prominent reformers and oppositionists and by 1970 the purging of the KSČ as a whole, which saw the exclusion of approximately 327,000 party members (21.7 per cent);[43] the re-imposition of censorship of the media, culture and academia; and a return to a tightly centralised planned economy. Another key component of normalisation, as Kieran Williams illustrates in his chapter, was strict recentralisation of the party's authority over a revamped state security service (StB), enabling it, albeit with 'superficial success', to monitor and harass dissident initiatives such as Charter 77 without reverting to the terroristic methods of the Stalinist period. In these measures, Husák's regime closely resembled a 'normal' Soviet-type system as defined by the Kremlin under Brezhnev. In short, the two decades of normalisation are all too often depicted as a 'timeless' unchanging era of politico-cultural stagnation and stultifying repression, resulting in ritualised conformity and public cynicism, apathy and opportunism.

But this essential truism does not mean that the communist authorities were totally incapable of generating more productive and strategic impulses or of satisfying, in part at least, demands for social and material advancement. It is our contention that the post-1969 Czechoslovak state was not simply coercive, destructive and immobile. For a start, as Michal Pullmann emphasises in his contribution, the Husákite normalisers portrayed themselves not as 'triumphant neo-Stalinists' hell-bent on a return to the pre-1968 dark days,[44] but as quasi-modernisers in search of a rational and stable 'socialist modernity' in which citizens could hope to realise a moderately prosperous, rounded 'quiet life' rooted in shared values and norms. Second, regardless of the constant public lies intoned by the normalised bureaucracy, Czechs and Slovaks were not prevented from forming living bonds in and with the existing communist system and shaping

their own heterogeneous realities around these bonds. And third, politics at the topmost layers did not 'freeze' after 1968–1969 either. Hudek's chapter, for instance, shows that the 'Slovak question' remained dynamic and involved continuous negotiation and renegotiation both within Slovakia itself and in the latter's relations with the Czech half of the federation. And at federal level, as Martin Štefek uncovers in his contribution, even the highest body in the ruling KSČ, the Presidium, was riven by factional in-fighting, a state of affairs that was also reflected in struggles that took place lower down the party hierarchy. Neither were the Czechoslovak state and judicial authorities as united and uniformly vindictive as is commonly perceived, an argument already put forward by Peter Bugge in his case study of the semi-independent Jazz Section of the Musicians' Union, published in 2008.[45] Even the *modus operandi* of the normalised state security service underwent a certain benign change, engaging in what a leading dissident called 'civilised violence': secret police officers could still ruin people's lives, but they now dressed in suits, called suspects in during working hours and shook their hand after a 'friendly' chat over a cup of coffee.[46]

It should also be recognised that the dominant negative trope of normalised Czechoslovakia privileges the viewpoint of the persecuted, a small fraction of society composed overwhelmingly of intellectual 'dissidents' and disgraced ex-reformers. But were there no beneficiaries of normalisation? Was there no measure of popular legitimacy? Aside from the cocooned members of the political, bureaucratic and security elites, Husák's regime endeavoured to meet the social and consumer aspirations of broad sections of the population, not least the industrial working classes, on whom state ideology notionally rested. 'Let's hope the workers don't get pissed off', Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal is rumoured to have said.[47] To be sure, this prosaic aim was never fully achieved; indeed, standards of living generally worsened from the late 1970s onwards as inflation, scarcities and economic bottlenecks increasingly took hold, engendering endemic public discontent and sullen resentment. But, as argued by several of our contributors—Donert, Pullmann and Vaněk among others—we should not overlook the impressive array of social welfare legislation and mass housing construction of the 1970s and 1980s, which undeniably improved the lot of many families, albeit largely inspired by gender-conservative impulses and political pragmatism. In the words of one otherwise unsympathetic observer, 'the size of financial support given

from public funds [to children, mothers and families] can be the envy of every country in the world'.[48]

Similarly, artificially low prices for basic commodities (notably beer), public utilities and rents were widely appreciated, even taken for granted, and the condoning of semi-legal practices such as moonlighting, bartering and bribery eased the burden of everyday life. The much-vaunted tacit 'social contract' between state and society, whereby economic and social well-being was guaranteed by the former in return for the political acquiescence of the latter, and state violence was kept at 'civilised' and largely inconspicuous levels, may be overdrawn, but it doubtless partially accounts for the almost total lack of overt popular resistance after 1969. In terms of popular reception of the regime, we must be aware of geographical differences: on the whole, the process of normalisation was perceived more positively in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. This is well illustrated in Hudek's contribution and confirmed by opinion polls conducted in the post-communist era which revealed that surprisingly high numbers of Slovaks looked back favourably on the years 1969–1989, some even regarding them as the most successful era of the entire twentieth century.[49]

Another important insight is that a distinction should be drawn between normalisation as a 'process', which relates largely to domestic affairs in Czechoslovakia and, as Krapfl shows in his chapter, took place at least partly in the 'semiotic realm'; and normalisation as a 'period', which also allows us to make comparisons with other East European countries and seek connections and transfers across borders.[50] If we adopt this approach, we are able to identify normalisation's asymmetrical, contested and contingent nature. When viewed as a process, a striking conclusion is that normalisation was not simply designed and enforced 'from above' by party, state and security elites, but was often the product of negotiation and interaction 'from below' involving lower party and state organs, institutional authorities, social organisations and a range of scientific and technical experts. To take just two examples: first, as graphically demonstrated by Krapfl and Sommer in their case studies of Nymburk and Gottwaldov respectively, the early 'consolidation' phase in late 1968 and 1969, which aimed above all at removing reformists from regional party and state hierarchies, was implemented by a combination of central and local normalisers, the latter operating in party and government structures, major enterprises, trade union branches and the press. Second, even at the highest echelons of power, as Štefek shows in his contribution, the political and institutional model of the 1970s and 1980s was 'neither monolithic, nor

completely sealed', and nor was it totally under the control of the Kremlin. Rather, 'policies were the outcome of highly intricate balancing acts' between a variety of interested parties at multiple levels, including the central KSČ apparatus, regional party structures, ministries, the State Planning Commission, the management of large factories and the trade unions.

Taking normalisation as a period, we can identify two main phases, the first between late 1968 and 1970–1971, often referred to as 'consolidation', and the second encompassing the whole of the last two decades of communist rule. During the first phase, the meaning of the term 'normalisation' was wide open. The months after the Warsaw Pact invasion and well into 1969 were times of profound flux, when normalisation was up for grabs: was it to denote the preservation of moderate reform, or a return to neo-Stalinism, or something in between? For leading party reformers and the vast bulk of the population, it signified the restoration of 'order' as a precondition, not for the total elimination of the Prague Spring innovations and a purge of the KSČ, but for the rapid withdrawal of foreign troops and the continuation of the post-January 1968 reformist road, albeit shorn of its most controversial elements. For the normalisers, on the other hand, the prime goal was to 'pacify' the party, 'stabilise' society and gradually consign the Dubčekite reforms to the dustbin of history. Although this task was largely achieved by the end of 1970, it was not as if 'normalisation' was ever fully implemented, not least because even eminent normalisers could not agree on what it entailed exactly. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, challenges remained, new tactics and strategies needed to be forged, unforeseen consequences confronted. As such, normalisation must be seen as an on-going venture, subtly evolving over time, demanding the constant attention of the Czechoslovak (and Soviet) leaderships. It was never set in stone.

Finally, in the realm of intra-bloc relations the image of Czechoslovakia underwent a kind of sea-change between 1968 and the 1970s. During the Prague Spring and the immediate post-invasion period, Czechoslovakia was officially regarded as a maverick, a 'threat' to socialism, especially in Warsaw and East Berlin. But by the mid-1970s, Husák's regime was widely viewed as one of the most loyal of the USSR's acolytes. It boasted political stability, exhibited relatively buoyant levels of economic growth and enjoyed improved standards of living. In these conditions, economic, social, cultural and tourist exchanges and partnerships between the states

of the Soviet bloc and Czechoslovakia were renewed and transnational ties were fashioned. It is to these manifold relations that we now turn.

Normalisation: Cross-Border Mentalities and Transnational Dimensions

Although our prime focus in this volume is on Czechoslovakia, we are also mindful of the transnational ramifications of normalisation, particularly for the ČSSR's nearest neighbours, Poland and the GDR, as well as for the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Some of these ramifications can still be felt more than three decades since the fall of communism. Recently, for instance, the German politician Petra Köpping, a member of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) in the 1980s and of the Social Democrats (SPD) since 2002, has referred to what she describes as the 'loophole mentality' (*Schlupfloch-Mentalität*) prevalent in her home state of Saxony, which she traces back to late GDR times:

> Our past has turned us into habitual circumventors of state edicts wherever possible. We will always try to get the maximum out of any given situation. If there is just one corner of a city centre where there are no signs mandating the wearing of [face] masks [for health reasons], people will pull down their masks immediately, no matter how crowded the street is.[51]

To take another example, in the mid-1970s a joke did the rounds across the East European bloc to the effect that the Soviet Union was now the 'only country [in the world to be] surrounded by hostile Communist nations'.[52] This was not a reference to intellectual opposition, however, and still less to the occasional flashes of national independence shown by 'liberal' party leaders such as Edward Gierek in Poland and Kádár in Hungary, and, at the other extreme, by Nicolae Ceauşescu, the uncompromising, ultra-authoritarian communist dictator in Romania. Rather, it was a nod towards the myriad ways in which ordinary East European citizens sought to thwart, evade and sidestep state authority without challenging it violently or head on.

In fact, normalisation brought forth a range of different reactions—both from a variety of social and political actors and from within, without and beyond Czechoslovakia's borders. When it comes to Soviet-Czechoslovak relations, as Applebaum shows in her chapter in the volume, it is even possible to identify a deliberate transnational policy at work in

the mutual desire to normalise and thereby reaffirm cultural interactions and ties of friendship between the two countries in the aftermath of the 1968 invasion. This was seen positively, by both sides, as a 'soft power' alternative to having to maintain large numbers of occupation troops in the ČSSR on anything other than a 'temporary' basis. For instance, a clear message that military invasion by Warsaw Pact armies and subsequent commitment to normalisation did not necessarily imply a full-scale reversal of the cultural policies of the 1960s was already contained in the decision on 29 August 1968 to have the Dinamo factory in Moscow organise a festival celebrating the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising against fascist rule in 1944. The importance of international and inter-personal socialist partnership in making a better, more just, virtuous and peaceful Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War was emphasised, as indeed it had been since the early 1960s, as a legitimising tool. This stood in contrast to the period of 'high Stalinism' from 1948 to 1953, when positive mention of the Slovak uprising was all but impossible and its leaders were denounced as 'bourgeois nationalists', enemies of the Soviet Union and agents of Western intelligence services.[53]

Equally, as Matthew Stibbe and Ondřej Klípa demonstrate in their contributions, the ruling parties in the GDR and Poland, as well as non-party technocrats and ordinary citizens from those states, found various ways of drawing political, economic and (inter-)personal uses from the post-1970 movement of people, goods and technologies across their southern frontiers with the ČSSR. They too saw advantages in clinging on to certain cultural narratives of World War II which helped to reconcile patriotism with pro-Soviet socialist internationalism. Other 'benefits' of friendly relations with Czechoslovakia included the transfer of 'good practice' in military and civil defence preparations against the West, and the exchange of information about dissident groups and suspicious individuals. These contacts were not only a transnational means of further promoting and supporting the normalisation project pursued by the Husák government. Rather, with the active, albeit self-interested support of 'fraternal' governments in East Berlin and Warsaw, cross-border ties themselves became normalised, and indeed part of the standard everyday experience of ordinary Poles, East Germans and Czechoslovaks in the last two decades of communist rule. In the somewhat different case of Yugoslavia, a socialist state but not a member of the Warsaw Pact or Soviet bloc, and furthermore a country without a direct border with the ČSSR, Ondřej Vojtěchovský and Jan Pelikán argue that contacts between citizens were

also important. They were used, unsuccessfully, to demonstrate the supposed advantages of normalisation over 1968-style reform for Czechoslovak workers, and, perhaps more effectively, to buy the latter off by offering them a semi-realistic and partially satisfying 'window to the West'.

None of this means that we should overlook or downplay the domestic dimensions of normalisation. At many levels, as the contributions in this volume show, this remains a Czechoslovak story with bleak as well as lighter sides to it, patches of darkness as well as varying shades of grey. Certainly, the former should never be ignored. Among the many everyday problems blighting the lives of ordinary Czechs and Slovaks were the 'stalled' economic development and growing 'national indebtedness' of the county, made worse by the 'lukewarm' response of the ruling party to Gorbachev's *perestroika* initiatives after 1985–1986;[54] the disastrous environmental outcomes produced by a regime still following mid-twentieth century models of central state planning and failing to adapt to new post-industrial technologies; the all-pervasive corruption and sense of unfair rewards for those with political connections; and the existential fears produced by the sudden (and often now forgotten) escalation in East-West military tensions and renewed talk of possible nuclear war after 1978–1979.[55] That said, our prime aim has been to portray normalisation in a balanced, non-categorical way which, crucially, gives back agency to 'ordinary' Czechs and Slovaks and fully recognises the dynamic, complex and contradictory essence of the period 1969–1989. In so doing, we have endeavoured to grant a more prominent voice to the majority of Czechoslovaks who lived their lives in real time, rather than in the suspended or interrupted historical time imagined in many scholarly portrayals of Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s.

Notes

1. A. Tertz (i.e. A. Sinyavsky), *The Trial Begins*, trans. by M. Hayward (London, 1960), p. 14. First published in the Paris-based, Polish-language journal *Kultura*, and in the UK by the literary magazine *Encounter*.
2. D. White, *Cold Warriors: Writers Who Waged the Literary Cold War* (London, 2019), p. 475.
3. Ibid., p. 478. We are also indebted to White's book for our synopsis of *The Trial Begins*.
4. Tertz, *The Trial Begins*, p. 92.

5. L. Vaculík, 'The "Two Thousand Words" Manifesto', 27 June 1968, reproduced in J. Navrátil et al. (eds), *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest, 1998), pp. 177–81 (here p. 177).

6. T. S. Brown, *Sixties Europe* (Cambridge, 2020), p. 4.

7. V. Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless' (1978), trans. by P. Wilson and reproduced in V. Havel, *Living in Truth: Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, edited by J. Vladislav (London, 1987) [1986], pp. 36–122 (here p. 110).

8. Ibid., p. 113.

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10. T. Garton Ash, 'Czechoslovakia under Ice' (February 1984), reproduced in T. Garton Ash, *The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe* (London, 1989), pp. 55–63 (here p. 63).

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50. We are indebted to Celia Donert for the idea of normalisation as a process and period.

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CHAPTER 2

Building the Normalisation Panorama, 1968–1969

James Krapfl

In *The Power of the Powerless*, Václav Havel's famous assessment of global political culture in the 1970s, the dissident playwright emphasised the significance of panoramas: those systems of signs embedded in the social landscape that indicate what behaviour is considered normal. Though Havel insisted that such panoramas are universal, he was especially concerned to illustrate the concept with evidence from his own environment, from Czechoslovakia. Havel explained how ordinary citizens, like a greengrocer, could be influenced by the panorama and contribute to its reproduction, for example by placing the sign 'Workers of the world, unite!' among his onions and carrots. The sign's significance, Havel observed, lay less in its text than its subtext, which could be rendered as 'I, the greengrocer XY, am afraid and therefore unquestioningly obedient'. The 'low foundations of power'—individuals' acquiescence in their own degradation—hid behind the high-sounding façade of ideology.[1] This was the essence of normalisation.

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27

We know this to be its essence because we can chart how individuals across Czechoslovakia, overwhelmingly united in opposition to the Warsaw Pact invasion of 21 August 1968, gradually over the subsequent fifteen months made compromise after compromise that ultimately led a critical mass, publicly or tacitly, to deny the support they had expressed in August for the reform programme the invasion was intended to suppress, and instead to profess love for the Soviet invaders and loyalty to the quisling regime installed in April 1969. We can document the process of 'auto-normalisation' by which individuals rejected a social contract they had started to co-author in favour of one dictated to them. It is a sordid story, one that most participants might prefer to forget, yet it is important to retrieve since the same essential process repeats itself in other times and places. As Havel suggested, it is part of the modern condition.

This chapter charts the process of normalisation in Czechoslovakia from August 1968 to November 1969, by which time the panorama's edifice was largely constructed. I refract the story through the prism of a single district—that of Nymburk in central Bohemia (Map 2.1). Other than the fact that Milovice, site of the Soviet army's main base, was located there, the region was unexceptional, making it a good example of the type of place where most Czechs lived.[2] My window to daily life is the district's weekly newspaper, *Nymbursko*, published, like all district newspapers in communist Czechoslovakia, jointly by the district committee (OV) of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and the District National Committee (ONV), an organ of local government. Despite the formal restoration of censorship in September 1968, most district newspapers continued to publish diverse opinions and report objectively on local political debates, and *Nymbursko* was no exception.[3] With some 10,000 readers, the newspaper reported regularly on a colourful spectrum of civic activity and provided a platform for the pluralistic expression of critical opinions.[4] This state of affairs resulted in a purge of the editorial staff in June 1969, though even afterwards evidence of heterodox views can be found. Whatever censorship may have influenced the newspaper's content, moreover, it is for our purposes a lesser evil than the self-censorship that inevitably structures memoirs, oral testimony and other *ex post facto* accounts. Only evidence from the period can allow us to trace changes in mentality and behaviour in 1968–1969 systematically and reasonably
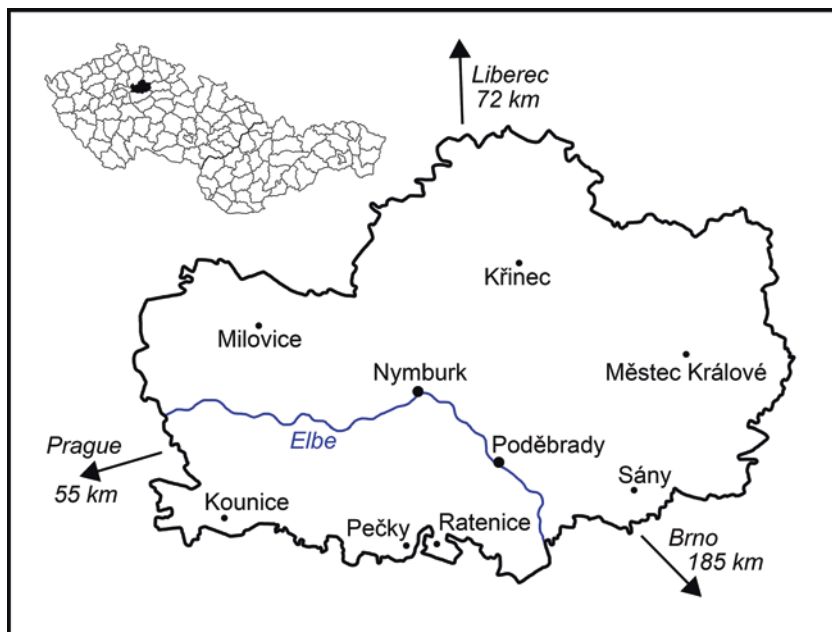
Map 2.1   The Nymburk District, east of Prague

reliably, though allowances must of course be made for what the sources omit.

This chapter reconstructs the evolution of political practices and mentalities among citizens and officials of the Nymburk district from the immediate aftermath of the August 1968 invasion, when Alexander Dubček resumed his position as First Secretary of the KSČ and proclaimed the goal of 'normalisation', to November 1969, by which point the panorama of Gustav Husák's normalisation, which Havel would later analyse, was essentially complete. The chapter complements Kieran Williams' classic study of the onset of normalisation 'from above' by examining the process 'from below'.[5] By investigating a setting typical of where most greengrocers and their customers lived, we can appreciate how Havel's panorama was constructed, how participation in it was tantamount to 'living a lie' and how 'life in truth' was necessarily subversive.

Dubček's Normalisation

A Panorama of Patriotic Unity

'Normalisation' did not mean the same thing in the wake of the August invasion that it came to mean a year later, and for which it remains irreparably known. When Dubček spoke of 'normalising conditions' in his radio address of 27 August, he meant restoration of 'order' as a precondition for the withdrawal of foreign troops and 'further steps along our post-January road'.[6] The term's meaning in subsequent weeks was variable. At the beginning of September, the Nymburk ONV's regulatory commission concluded from a survey of the district's most important economic enterprises that local life had already been normalised. At the same time, the ONV council adopted a plan for a still-to-be-completed normalisation, focusing on maintaining supply chains, preserving order, securing the harvest, assessing damage and removing graffiti that might insult Warsaw Pact troops or their leaders. The ONV chairman urged municipal national committees to organise public meetings to explain the plan, recommending that they stress a line of reasoning that would justify all subsequent versions of normalisation: 'there is no alternative'. At the time, this meant there was no choice but to follow the 'Moscow Protocol', by which Czechoslovaks would compromise on some but not all Prague Spring reforms in exchange for foreign troops' departure.[7]

It was possible to believe such normalisation could be achieved because of the Czechoslovak population's overpowering unity and discipline, which found expression in support for the country's reinstated leadership. Above all this meant Dubček and Ludvík Svoboda, the country's president, who had been guarantors of the Spring and for whom workers and students from September to November volunteered labour on otherwise free Saturdays.[8] Individuals and collectives also donated earnings to the 'Fund of the Republic', a grassroots initiative conceived in the tense days of late July to help revitalise the Czechoslovak economy.[9] Such gestures partially satisfied citizens' desire to do something constructive, while their public nature alongside ubiquitous graffiti and window decorations supporting the reformers, reinforced the sense of unity.[10] It was a positive panorama, which like its later, negative counterpart normalised a certain pattern of social behaviour and public expression. By all accounts, participants experienced it as edifying.

Williams emphasises that trust placed in leaders like Dubček and Svoboda was conditional, and rhetoric from the Nymburk district provides abundant confirmation.[11] 'We trust our constitutional authorities', wrote the district committee of the National Front (NF), 'that in their coming activities they will adopt positions that will allow our life to develop in the spirit of the path begun in January'.[12] 'We are with you' read the inscription on widely distributed photographs of Dubček, Svoboda, National Assembly chairman Josef Smrkovský and Prime Minister Oldřich Černík; 'be with us'.[13] Reflecting its awareness of the bargain, when the OV KSČ presidium announced that it would have to re-emphasise the party's constitutionally guaranteed leading role in state and society, it did so almost apologetically, insisting that the party still intended to fulfil its reformist April Action Programme.[14] While *Nymbursko* adopted a more circumspect tone, in contrast with its pre-invasion radicalism, its editors emphasised that they saw mild self-censorship as just a temporary compromise necessary to secure the reform course.[15] František Klíma, the OV KSČ's leading secretary, and many ordinary citizens agreed that 'people in other socialist states misunderstood what was happening'.[16] Officials suggested, and citizens hoped, that by cooperating with new restrictions 'normalisation'—meaning the departure of occupying armies—would come quickly.[17] Indeed, from September only Soviet troops remained.

In many respects, district life persisted on the reform course. Throughout the autumn local organisations continued to adopt and implement their own action programmes, as they had begun doing over the summer.[18] New associations were founded, from the Club of Rural Youth to branches of the new Czech Women's League; scouts, whose organisation had been restored in the Spring, now obtained a meeting space.[19] Rehabilitations continued of those imprisoned, dismissed from their jobs or expelled from the party under Stalinism.[20] Citizens continued articulating visions of an ideal society. Teachers in Kounice, for example, promised President Svoboda that they would educate children 'for a new society, for a humane, democratically socialist society, for a society of people with straight backs and honest faces'. 'We want to teach them truth', they added, 'to know truth and to live in truth'.[21]

While the panorama bespoke united support for Czechoslovakia's reformist course and opposition to Soviet occupation, there were dissenters. Communists who had opposed the reform movement before 21 August had largely lain low in subsequent weeks in the face of

overwhelming popular resistance to the invasion, but in the autumn they began to regroup. At the OV KSČ presidium's behest, 'old communists'—members who had been active before the war—gathered on 20 September. It was the first of several meetings of what by early 1969 would become a distinctly conservative pressure group.[22] Already in September, when the OV KSČ promised to try to preserve 'everything good from the post-January development', it implied that not everything had been positive, and this space for doubt grew as the year faded.[23] At an *aktiv* for the district's communist functionaries in October, the Central Committee (CC) member Jan Piller 'opened new possibilities for expression for many people' when he declared that, while the party would in no case depart from its post-January policies, there had been mistakes.[24] The rise of this critical discourse underscored divisions within the party and suggested that the thesis of international misunderstanding was losing ground, raising the question of what Czechoslovak citizens and their leaders might have done differently before August. Most criticism was levelled at tactics rather than the reform movement's aims, which remained sacrosanct, but the door was now open to revision.

The fiftieth anniversary of Czechoslovakia's founding, on 28 October, was the high-water mark of post-invasion unity. Nymburk's district and municipal NF and KSČ committees, together with the national committees, held a joint ceremony where Klíma reviewed the past half-century, praising Tomáš G. Masaryk's contributions while insisting that 'we must be realists' and identifying a successor of the country that had invaded three decades previously (West Germany) as a greater danger than the one that had invaded two months before.[25] This celebration was overshadowed, however, by well-attended events throughout the district that showcased popular creativity and patriotism. In several municipalities parades preceded the planting of Trees of the Republic, poetry recitals, speeches and dances.[26] Surviving Legionaries were honoured in Pečky and Sány.[27] Tears glistened in listeners' eyes at a concert in Ratenice, where photographs of Dubček and Svoboda were displayed.[28] Donations poured into the Fund of the Republic.[29] The anniversary provided an opportunity for citizens to express wishes for the republic's next fifty years, such as 'economic prosperity, truth and freedom'; 'genuine independence'; and 'socialism that is not just a dream'.[30] No opponent dared challenge this enthusiastic mobilisation of symbols. The 51st anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which inaugurated the 'Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship' on 7 November, paled in comparison.[31]

Divisions Become Clear

The divisions that began to appear in September became alarmingly apparent following a plenary meeting of the CC KSČ from 14 to 17 November. The plenum adopted a resolution that, while promising to continue on the reform path, officially declared that not all post-January developments had been positive.[32] This was a victory for Central Committee conservatives, succoured by none other than Leonid Brezhnev, who personally dictated the resolution's allowable parameters.[33] The document prioritised restoration of party unity and the reassertion of the party's leading role, alongside friendship with the USSR and other socialist countries.

Vasil Biľak's visit to Pečky on 29 November was a revelation of divisiveness. The party committee in the town's biggest factory invited the archconservative CC secretary to report on the November plenum, and roughly 400 party members welcomed him with tumultuous applause. Biľak acknowledged that 'January' had had to happen because of preceding 'deformations', but he listed failure after failure in the way the process had unfolded. He declared it necessary to unite 'healthy forces' in the party but insisted this did not mean a return to pre-January policies. The assembled communists gave him a standing ovation.[34] This was the first serious expression of local opposition to the reform programme, and conservatives grew in confidence as a result. It was in this climate of growing tension that the OV KSČ presidium discussed the November CC plenum on 4 December. The presidium decided to call a flurry of consultations, including a meeting of party groupings within the district committees of other NF members, a gathering of 'old communists', precinct *aktivy* and an ideological conference.[35]

Indicative of the concerted effort that Central Committee conservatives were making to reorient public opinion, the CC secretary Jozef Lenárt visited Nymburk on 5 December. He expounded on the November resolution, appealed for party unity and deflected attention from politics to the economy.[36] Previously that autumn, acute economic difficulties had been attributed to the invasion and its aftermath. Now, Lenárt suggested that the economy was ailing because of Spring reforms, and his visit heralded a rhetorical shift towards quotidian concerns. Normalisation strategies in September had regularly emphasised the need for 'calm and order' (*klid a pořádek*); now one increasingly heard of the need for 'peace to work' (*klid k práci*). When the trope first entered public discourse in December 1968, some still used it to mean 'peace to work without fears

for January', but it introduced the idea of exchange: what would people be willing to sacrifice for peace?[37]

Alongside these developments, the Soviet Union became a more significant local actor. From the shelter of their bases, Soviet agents and Czechoslovak sympathisers began disseminating a Czech-language bulletin, *Zprávy* ('News'), which in violation of Czechoslovak law spread disinformation and rumours discrediting reformist politicians. Citizens complained at public meetings, in letters to functionaries and on the pages of *Nymbursko*, but the Soviets would let nothing be done.[38] A delegation from Nymburk's sister district—Mytishchi in the Moscow region—visited on 12 December to honour the 25th anniversary of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Treaty.[39] The district branch of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship League (SČSP), which had emerged from hibernation to collaborate with the OV KSČ, OV NF and Soviet army for the October Revolution commemorations, became more active as well.[40]

Though the panorama of unity was shaken by these developments, it was not yet shattered. Donations kept flowing to the Fund of the Republic, while exhibits and gestures of public service in honour of the fiftieth anniversary continued until the end of 1968.[41] Special fanfare greeted the founding of local branches of the new Association of Collective Farmers (SDR), with its auxiliary association for previously marginalised independent farmers.[42] 'January' remained a sacred referent, which could be invoked to legitimise accomplished or potential courses of action, whereas the alternative referent that oppositionists offered—socialism as built between 1948 and 1968—evidently did not hold the same appeal (though no one argued against it either).[43]

Tense Desultoriness

The first months of 1969 fostered feelings of aimlessness. Despite Dubček's public assurances on 4 January that Smrkovský's impending demotion from National Assembly chairman to vice-chairman of the new Federal Assembly did not signal a departure from the reformist course, that is how conservatives in fact interpreted this consequence of Czechoslovakia's 1 January federalisation.[44] In Nymburk, the OV KSČ formed a commission to evaluate the district's post-January development, and plenary discussion of its report on 27–28 January 'provided many occasions for an open exchange of opinions'. In over forty interventions from the floor, committee members expressed opposing views on relations with the USSR, on

whether there had been 'anti-socialist tendencies' in the 'renewal process', on whether mass media were to blame, and on the role of democracy in the party and state. Klíma invoked the CC's November resolution with its call for party unification, though he added that this could be achieved only through 'differentiation of opinion'.[45]

Jan Palach's self-immolation in Prague on 16 January, his death three days later and ensuing expressions of popular solidarity cast a pall over the OV plenum.[46] *Nymbursko* reported no unrest, but it did indicate that Palach's deed was widely discussed and even the subject of an affecting shop window display.[47] Palach may have emboldened some citizens to raise their voices in questioning and critique, for example at a 22 January public meeting in Milovice about Soviet troops. Approximately 200 villagers participated in the three-hour forum and did not hesitate to ask 'delicate' questions.[48] Cattle breeders visiting Prague for training in early February pressed an OV KSČ secretary about Palach, censorship and the Soviet press's position on Dubček.[49]

The opposition likewise grew bolder. When the OV KSČ arranged a meeting of sixty-four 'old communists' for 12 February, the seniors asked that Red Army officers be invited; they were welcomed with cries of 'Long Live the Soviet Union', and the ensuing discussion portrayed the Soviet presence as necessary to help 'true' communists in Czechoslovakia.[50] Even more provocatively, on 21 February, the 21st anniversary of the communist seizure of power, People's Militia units in the district fraternised with Soviet soldiers, demonstrating a previously unspeakable alliance. Klíma, speaking to militiamen, blamed disunity on party members who employed 'popular slogans about freedom and democracy' and so played into the hands of 'anti-socialist, right-wing forces'.[51]

The crystallisation of battle lines occurred in an atmosphere of growing uncertainty due partially to lack of clear leadership. Dubček remained First Secretary, but he was increasingly under siege from Central Committee rivals, and his popular support was no longer unassailable.[52] Federalisation compounded confusion, especially among bureaucrats in the state structure; as national committee officials learned in February and March training sessions, even their instructors were unsure what the practical implications were supposed to be.[53] Local party officials often failed to acquaint basic organisations with information in the OV's newsletter, and they exhibited no haste to convoke the annual membership meetings that were supposed to occur between 15 January and 31 March. By 5 March only 25 per cent had taken place, though another 50 per cent or so were

held in the next three weeks.[54] The meetings, at which members were sup-
posed to evaluate 'post-January development' and apply the CC's resolu-
tions to local conditions, featured an 'open exchange of opinions' and
were sometimes 'very stormy'. Yet OV secretaries complained of low par-
ticipation rates, averaging between 55 and 60 per cent.[55]

Institutionalisation of new associations continued during the first quar-
ter of 1969, providing tangible signs that 'January' did not yet belong in
the past tense. The district committee of the new SDR convened its first
meeting in January, union reconstruction proceeded apace and there was
talk of developing workers' councils.[56] *Zprávy* kept circulating, however;
the district SČSP grew more active, and public debates about provocative
acts, from civic criticism of Soviet soldiers to old communists' praise for
the same, grew steadily more bitter.[57] Local party leaders and other offi-
cials equivocated between the two sides, but the cleavages were coming
into ever sharper focus in an atmosphere of burgeoning tension that sim-
ply awaited a spark to explode. The panorama of unified resistance to
occupation and support for reform was shaken to breaking point.

Husák's Normalisation

The Conservative Coup

The spark was an ice hockey match. On 28 March, Czechoslovakia beat
the USSR 4:3 at the World Championships in Stockholm, and Czechoslovak
fans burst into jubilation that naturally took on anti-Soviet overtones.
Nine Red Army garrisons were attacked while peaceful protests targeted
twelve others, Aeroflot's Prague office was destroyed, and Moscow threat-
ened intervention if further incidents were not prevented.[58] These devel-
opments sent party and state officials at all levels into crisis mode. The CC
KSČ adopted a declaration on 1 April condemning 'anti-socialist forces'
and promising to eliminate any doubt that 'socialism' was in Czechoslovakia
to stay; the OV KSČ presidium held an extraordinary meeting on 2 April
to consider the ice hockey match and the CC's declaration.[59] OV officials
noted there had been no vandalism or open confrontations in the district,
but nonetheless they welcomed proposals from the OV NF secretary on
how they might show affection for the USSR at upcoming celebrations of
Lenin's 99th birthday, May Day and the 24th anniversary of
Czechoslovakia's liberation.[60]

It was not yet clear that crisis managers would abandon attempts to find a narrow path forward along the post-January course. When the OV KSČ's ideological commission met on 3 April, it demanded an end to 'the distribution of all illegal printed matter', implicating *Zprávy* alongside anti-Soviet leaflets for 'not helping to calm the situation'.[61] The OV NF on 8 April exhorted Front organisations to influence their members 'in harmony with the cultural traditions and maturity of our nations in favour of a peaceful and democratic resolution' that would secure 'order, certitude and peace for creative work'.[62] It was a transitional discourse, anticipating the rhetoric of Husák's normalisation while retaining tropes from the Spring.

The following day, however, in daylong deliberations about 'how to confront anti-socialist and anti-Soviet forces', the OV KSČ plenum dealt a decisive blow to hopes for a middle way. The plenum mandated training for basic organisation functionaries and ordered communists in the ONV and district newspaper to implement party policies conscientiously, in the spirit of the November resolution. The OV warned party members it would 'no longer tolerate the incorrect interpretation of party resolutions' or 'subjective opinions damaging to the party', and it promised 'more decisively than in the past to confront the appearance of right-wing opportunist, adventurous and left-wing extremist forces and tendencies'.[63] Though such language had recently been heard in 'old communist' and People's Militia meetings, it was new for the OV leadership.[64] Local party elites and, indeed, most citizens had insisted until this point that no one was, or prior to the invasion had been, against socialism.[65] ONV officials incriminated 'certain communists' at all levels, who 'do not respect the principles of democratic centralism and disseminate ideological confusion…. These undisciplined party members, regardless of their function, must be stripped of their influence on the party masses'.[66]

Just a few days later, on 17 April, the CC plenum replaced Dubček with Husák as First Secretary. The change sent a strong signal that a new era had begun, and in Nymburk it began with a purge. The OV KSČ held an extraordinary plenum the next day, and in the course of several hours six presidium members were 'relieved'. Three replacements were elected, including the ONV chairman, assuring even closer coordination between the party and local government.[67] An ONV plenum implemented its own cadre changes on 23 April.[68] Reconfiguration of leadership was just the first step. On 23 April the OV KSČ presidium decided to 'evaluate' the work of its *aparát*.[69] It proceeded to consider 'cadre and organisational

questions'—code for staffing changes—on 5 May.[70] The planned school-ing for local functionaries took place on 4–7 May, providing party leaders an opportunity to test subordinates' loyalty to the new regime.[71]

While these first local purges were unfolding and the party leadership was clamping down on the rank-and-file, some Spring initiatives contin-ued. The district council of what had originally been a centralised union organisation dissolved itself in early April, succeeded by a district council of federated union associations.[72] Rehabilitation proceeded, though responsible commissioners now emphasised limitations with respect to 'socialist legality'.[73] Several such developments, however, while reformist in form, became reactionary in content. The ONV, for example, finally accepted the resignation of a hospital director who had been suspended due to employee opposition in the democratic Spring, but he was now appointed head of the ONV's health department.[74]

Meanwhile, Soviet soldiers in cooperation with the SČSP organised cel-ebrations of Lenin's birthday on 21 April.[75] Observations of 1 May fol-lowed in a highly controlled fashion, emphasising 'socialist internationalism' and contrasting markedly with the joyous effervescence of the previous year—with significantly lower turnout.[76] *Nymbursko*, noticeably chas-tened, featured paeans to Lenin, the Soviet Union and the Red Army.[77] 'Old communists' identified the hockey riots as counter-revolutionary and demanded 'an end to discussion'.[78] On 14 May the ONV issued a formal apology to people it had identified as traitors in August 1968.[79]

In the semiotic realm, April and May 1969 were months when the past was radically reinterpreted. 'January' remained sacred, but threats to socialism were seen where previously they had been denied, such that the invasion could now be justified. The language of condemnation became normalised, eclipsing a previous emphasis on conciliation. 'We decisively condemn expressions of vandalism and political daredevilry', wrote the district council presidium of the Czech Women's League, blaming the 'anti-Soviet and anti-socialist inclinations of certain elements'.[80] Such dec-larations were published in abundance, to the exclusion of other views, in a clear attempt to give the impression of mass support. For this notional majority, 'normalisation' now offered the prospect of 'the peaceful build-ing of socialism'.[81] Husák's normalisation contract was simply peace and quiet—(the 'quiet life' to which Michal Pullmann refers in his contribu-tion to this volume—) in exchange for appropriate displays of allegiance to 'socialism', however the party might define it, and love for the Soviet Union. The new deal was packaged, moreover, as the true meaning of

'January', which 'old communists' claimed always to have supported, dislodging the signifier from its referent.[82] A new panorama was under construction, and individuals began to face unavoidable decisions about whether to help build it.

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The Anti-Action Programme

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A further stage in the panorama's construction began when the Central Committee plenum adopted 'Realisation Guidelines' for the party on 30 May. This sweeping document, which bore Husák's imprint, was the Action Programme's antithesis. Though it insisted there was no need to change the 'political line' adopted in January 1968, the document declared that the means to pursue that line had to be fundamentally reconfigured. According to the Guidelines, the party's main goals were to renew internal unity on a Leninist basis, restore the party's leading role in society and especially social organisations, and rectify relationships with the Communist parties of the USSR and other socialist countries.[83] Just as the Action Programme had been a model for programmatic documents that all party units and many other organisations had been called on to draft for themselves, so the same groups were now expected to compose their own realisation guidelines, applying the CC's principles to local circumstances.[84] Just as in the Spring, citizens had been invited to co-author their limited liberation, now they were expected to authorise their own subordination.

In the Nymburk district, the OV KSČ was first to sign on. The morning after the CC plenum, Klíma read Husák's speech to a packed *aktiv* of district functionaries, and the OV plenum approved another round of cadre changes. Several staff members quit.[85] An OV commission immediately began drafting realisation guidelines for the district party, with the plenum formally adopting them on 18 June. The guidelines specified how the party would fight 'right-wing forces' (mainly by removing designated individuals from positions of influence), how it would strive to unite the party on the basis of thoroughgoing Leninism, how it would resist any 'pluralist understanding' of the National Front, how it would support enterprise managers while strengthening the party's influence in unions and the SDR, and how it would cultivate friendship with the USSR.[86] The OV also sent agents to help basic organisations respond to the CC plenum.[87] In an extraordinary second round of membership meetings, basic organisations adopted realisation guidelines throughout the summer, with the OV reviewing their progress.[88]

The ONV began drafting realisation guidelines on 17 June, asking departments to complete their own by 15 July and aiming to have a plan for the whole district by August, which the ONV plenum would approve in September.[89] Already in June, though, the plenum discussed 'certain cadre changes', voting *inter alia* to replace the district newspaper editors. A change of tone was immediate, as the paper condemned the 'nationalist psychosis' that *Nymbursko* had supposedly spread before, hindering citizens from appreciating the Warsaw Pact's 'assistance in preventing the breakdown of the party and state apparatus of socialist power'.[90]

Other organisations followed suit. A plenum of the NF's district committee, meeting on 27 June, affirmed its subservience to the KSČ even while invoking 'January'.[91] On 2 July, chairmen of 'watchdog' committees in the grocery concern Jednota discussed how they would implement party guidelines.[92] The new District Council of Union Associations considered 'cadre and organisational questions' on 10 July and, like other organisations, proclaimed its allegiance to the party.[93] Even the district's invalids, or at least the presidium of their association, promised on 16 July to base their activity on the KSČ's political line.[94] It was clear that any functionary in these associations who did not fall in line could expect to become 'a cadre and organisational question', and so most conformed, even if they still claimed adherence to the ideals of January. It would be only a matter of time before expressions of conformity would be required below leadership ranks. Communists in Jednota, for example, pledged 'to deal with' employees who did not serve Soviet customers with appropriate enthusiasm, the district union council vowed to root out 'right-wing opportunism' among union members, and party organisations in schools took it on themselves to maintain registries of 'incorrect opinions' voiced by colleagues and students.[95]

The expectation that both party and non-party organisations adopt realisation guidelines at all levels was a means of restoring habits of Leninist 'democratic centralism' within the party and of re-establishing patterns by which, in non-party organisations, the party could exercise its leading role. The language of loyalty to the principles of January was crucial in making it easier for individuals and collectives to take this first step, alongside whatever concern they may have had for their positions. As with the sign that Havel would later exegete, it was possible to rationalise subordination to the party's new leadership. It was only the first step, however, for no longer did the 'leading role' mean a kind of paternalistic umpireship, as it had under Dubček. Now it meant dictatorship.

Not everyone went along. The OV KSČ presidium noted on 23 July that some members had left the party rather than accept the new conditions. Unions also proved troublesome, and the presidium considered further measures to subordinate them.[96] Party cells in non-party organisations began discussing, as they had under Stalinism, how they might manipulate circumstances to the party's advantage, suggesting there would have been resistance to less conspiratorial approaches.[97]

The USSR became a more visible presence over the summer. The OV KSČ had discussed in early June how it might strengthen ties with Mytishchi, and a delegation from the OV and SČSP spent a week visiting the sister district in early July.[98] Some forty-seven children from the district attended a three-week camp near Mytishchi in August (though the SČSP complained that workplace collectives, which included the children's parents, were somehow reluctant to donate money for it).[99] New branches of the SČSP sprang up, including one in the ONV.[100] Soviet soldiers erected a new Lenin statue on 19 August, providing the district's citizens with another opportunity 'to show their love and friendship for the Soviet Union'.[101]

Despite these efforts, when an extraordinary OV KSČ plenum convened on 30 July to consider the potential for unrest on 21 August, it concluded that the situation was not yet normalised. What normalisation now meant was, even more explicitly than in April, the 'calm and order' necessary for 'a quiet life and creative work'.[102] On 31 July, one of *Nymbursko*'s new editors attempted to guilt-trip readers who 'stand aside' or even 'malign those who try to assist the honest work'. 'Such behaviour', he wrote, 'is out of place and unfair to others', and 'all functionaries, workers and citizens will have to observe such people's deportment in all spheres' in order to protect 'the unity of the party and life in our state'.[103]

The New Panorama

Husák and his allies were determined to use the anniversary to tighten the screws. At a state-wide *aktiv* of communists in Prague on 19 August, Husák and Svoboda took turns excoriating Dubček for 'serious errors' prior to the 'August events'.[104] The attack was a clear signal that even the pretence of continuing on the 'post-January' path was about to be dropped. It was a provocation that, if anything, intensified the magnitude of protests over subsequent days. *Nymbursko* reported nothing more

serious locally than 'fascist' graffiti and 'attempts to disturb peace and order', but in Prague, Brno and Liberec Czechoslovak soldiers, police and People's Militiamen violently suppressed large demonstrations.[105] The unrest provided an excuse for the Federal Assembly presidium, on 22 August, to approve a 'legal measure' in defence of 'public order'. It extended the range of political crimes for which citizens could be arrested or fined, curtailed due process and allowed for employees' dismissal and the dissolution of 'seditious' organisations.[106]

In early September, *Nymbursko* published an appeal from the party's basic organisation in the ONV, claiming their eyes had been opened by Husák's and Svoboda's 'revelations' and calling for Dubček and Smrkovský to be dismissed from all functions. The authors claimed to have uncovered 'right-wing opportunism' in the ONV as well, and they specifically demanded that the district prosecutor be dismissed (perhaps for reluctance to apply the new legal measure).[107] Accordingly, when the ONV plenum adopted realisation guidelines for the district on 9 September, hailing them as 'our charter of consolidation and normalisation', it agreed to a purge more systematic than any yet effected. 'We assure…Dr. Husák', read the plenum's statement, 'of our full support and determination to cleanse all ONV organs of these subversive elements and deny them their hostile activity'.[108] In subsequent weeks *Nymbursko* published a series of apparently grassroots petitions calling for various purges: of the central committee of a veterans' association, of the locomotive depot, of the Women's League, and so on.[109]

The beginning of a new school year provided communists in the ONV's education department with the opportunity to impose ideological conformity throughout the school system—seen, with the media, as a priority in the 'ideological struggle'.[110] The new department head fulminated that youth had been 'catastrophically' misled by teachers who 'neglected the class approach to solving all problems'.[111] The ONV completed 'a concrete analysis of the situation in schools', determining 'who organised pressure groups, petitions and strikes, who disliked being called "comrade", who infected children with the poison of anti-Sovietism, and who threw down stars from school buildings'. It adopted appropriate 'cadre measures' and threatened more if necessary.[112] School-based party organisations adopted resolutions supporting 'all measures for the renewal of calm and order' and committing to train youth in the spirit of proletarian internationalism.[113]

Schools were not the only workplaces where citizens were now required to indicate acceptance of the new panorama or face unpleasant consequences. 'Leading economic workers' in one Nymburk enterprise welcomed the CC's move to 'responsible realistic politics' and pledged rigorously to enforce the party's political line by tolerating no disruption of work discipline, slandering of political leaders, distribution of illegal texts or insults to other socialist states. Definitive 'measures' would be taken against 'disruptors', meaning they would be dismissed from their place of employment and have difficulty finding another.[114] By this time, the party was successfully reasserting control over unions, which reprised their traditional role of coordinating the appearance of worker support for the regime and silencing opposition. On 19 September, the union organisation in the machine shop of Czechoslovak Railways, previously a hotbed of radicalism, became the first to volunteer labour in honour of the upcoming Soviet anniversaries and as a sign of 'trust in KSČ and union leadership'.[115] Others followed throughout the autumn.[116] SČSP branches were founded in workplaces, and party members heeded the OV's call to 'increase their ideological influence on other workers'.[117]

Inscription in the Book of Life increasingly depended on how one portrayed 1968. Confirming how removed the National Front now was from its former self, its OV presidium cancelled its August 1968 resolution condemning the invasion and planned a series of political and cultural activities with Soviet troops.[118] On 28 September, the OV KSČ plenum approved a declaration characterising the invasion as 'no aggression, but the comradely, international assistance of socialist countries against counter-revolution among us'. The document was inspired by the CC plenum of 25–26 September, which had approved a similar statement, declared illegal the (extraordinary 14th) party congress secretly held on 22 August 1968, and removed Smrkovský and other reformers from the Central Committee.[119] On 1 October, the OV plenum unanimously approved its own sweeping cadre changes, with co-optation to fill vacated places. Anyone who had expressed 'right-wing opinions' and not repented—who, for example, continued to 'characterise the situation as occupation and violation of sovereignty, adopt anti-Soviet positions or recognise the validity of the fourteenth congress'—was to be expelled from positions of leadership at all levels of the party, state and economy.[120] This step anticipated the purge of 1970, when vetting commissions would systematically thin party membership by 22 per cent.[121]

Repentance was held out as a possibility. In narrating the recent past, wherein right-wing opportunist elements had exploited the media to spread counter-revolutionary 'Western' propaganda about 'socialism with a human face', architects of the new panorama posited that people could have been misled.[122] The OV KSČ emphasised that the CC was giving 'all honest party members the possibility, after due reflection, to involve themselves fully in party work again'.[123] *Nymbursko* recounted the example of a woman who had not recently paid dues, but when members of her basic organisation visited and asked whether she agreed with the party's new line, she replied that she had no objections and in any case did not want to see a departure from socialism, so she paid.[124] Templates for auto-normalisation were extended beyond party ranks as well; all that was required was to deny what one had said and done a year previously, by claiming either that one's eyes were now opened or that one had never noticed anything in the first place. 'We are deeply shaken', wrote elementary school teachers in Křinec, 'by information we have acquired about certain comrades in 1968. Now it is clear to us that the August arrival of armies from fraternal states saved socialism and a satisfactory life for all people of good will in our country'.[125] Collective farmers could perhaps most credibly claim that they had been 'too busy working' in 1968 to pay attention to politics, and they were encouraged to do so.[126]

To further generate the impression of an invincible movement behind the new course, loyalist associations were founded in autumn 1969, formally continuing the trend towards the pluralisation of associational life that had begun in 1968, but again giving it anti-reformist content. The district's first branch of the new Leninist Youth Association was created in Poděbrady on 11 October, with more following as the year waned. The association aimed to be 'an assistant to the KSČ among the ranks of youth' and to facilitate the integration of youth organisations.[127] A Left Front was also established in October for the purpose of 'popularising Marxism-Leninism, its development and application in our conditions, and the struggle against enemy ideologies'.[128] Enthusiasm for these organisations, as for the new SČSP chapters, was somewhat lacking. One of *Nymbursko*'s editors complained that teachers had failed to support the Leninist Youth's attempt to establish 'closer ties' with Pioneers, and she noted that of 650 former SČSP members in Milovice, just sixty had joined the renewed society. But, she added, 'they want only active members' anyway.[129]

In the November 1969 celebrations that inaugurated the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, district officials began speaking of

'consolidation' in the past tense.[130] ONV council meetings returned to everyday concerns.[131] Though more purges and 'integration' of associational life would follow in the early 1970s and the official 14th party congress would declare consolidation complete only in May 1971, the normalisation panorama was now established. It featured in some respects a return to old scripts, but with public knowledge that it was now all a show.

Conclusion

The shift in normalisation's meaning from 'departure of foreign troops and continuation along the post-January path' to 'love for the Soviet Union and rejection of right-wing opportunism' was attended by a shift in the panorama of signs and practices that marked the parameters of normality. In September and October 1968 the panorama was an edifying one: unified resistance characterised by grassroots creativity, generosity, 'straight backs and honest faces'. A year later, the panorama stifled creativity and normalised mendacity; everywhere one could see betrayal of the previous year's stances and condemnation of yesterday's icons, mediated by unnatural language. Accompanying these shifts was a fundamental revision of the social contract: from acceptance of circumscribed freedom in exchange for preservation of at least some Spring reforms to public performance of ideological conformism in exchange for a 'quiet life'.

It was not through physical violence that the panorama of unity was shaken and shattered, though the Soviet army presence was a prerequisite. The transformation occurred incrementally, starting with acceptance of certain limitations in September 1968 in accordance with the 'TINA' thesis (there is no alternative). Not all actors saw their freedom circumscribed, however; 'old communists', the People's Militia and other conservatives were able steadily to expand their range of speech and action. Fatefully, the Prague Spring had not constituted any final authority independent of the party, so as leaders of the Spring yielded to party discipline, scope for opposition diminished. The decisive break came in April 1969, when citizens were no longer asked just to accept restrictions, but to begin producing signs of adherence to a dictated paradigm. Again, the TINA argument and lingering hopes of salvaging some reforms helped maximise cooperation, and then came the Realisation Guidelines and associated purges. Consolidating control over social organisations and media, then turning schools and workplaces from spaces of dissent to sites of ideological

amplification, the recentralised party was able to create a panorama based on false representation of 1968.

'Auto-normalisation' was the process by which individuals accepted the new social contract, which remained valid for twenty years. Motivations surely varied. At one extreme were true believers, including the 'old communists' and People's Militia; at the other were the salesclerks and teachers who, to avoid losing their jobs or suffering other consequences, hid their feelings about Soviet customers or pretended to have been deluded in 1968. The need to lie about one's stance in 1968 continued throughout the normalisation decades, since a record of this stance was maintained in employment offices and it was the subject of questioning in interviews and applications. This was the condition that Havel described as 'living a lie', though that condition was even more all-encompassing. While one might not find anything wrong with the workers of the world uniting, and one might even agree that 'right-wing opportunism' was dangerous, the context in which such ideological statements were demanded made them part of the lie about 1968. Even worse were invitations to join in unjust vilification, whether of Dubček and Smrkovský in 1969 or of Charter 77 signatories in 1978; when asked at work to raise one's hand in condemnation, it was rational to go along—refusing would not change anything— but it underscored one's own complicity in the system that ended the Prague Spring. As Havel observed, the line between victim and oppressor ran through each person.[132]

A close look at the beginnings of normalisation can help us understand why Havel's notion of 'living in truth' would have resonated with his fellow citizens, and why 'dissent' could be as simple as living in truth. While Dubček's normalisation still allowed pluralist discussion in search of truth, Husák's dictated 'truth' was quite evidently contrary to experience. The truth opposed to the foundational lies of Husák's regime was not necessarily an objective, 'modernist' truth, as some commentators have averred; it was rather a matter of personal integrity, of embracing one's own responsibility to seek truth in a field of uncertainty instead of accepting 'truth' as dictated by external authority, especially when that 'truth' violated one's own experience.[133] Simply naming what happened on 21 August an 'invasion' rather than 'fraternal assistance', and continuing to do so despite persecution, was an act of 'life in truth'. It was an act, as Havel noted, with implications not just for oneself, but for one's family, friends and co-workers, since it was likely to complicate their lives, too. It is for this reason that some citizens could, in agreement with Nymburk's education director,

argue that dissidents should feel guilty. What happened in 1989, however, is that a critical mass of people began to 'live in truth', and the normalisation panorama collapsed. That this collapse could not have happened had the Soviet Union retained its willingness to intervene does not change the fact that it was civic initiative that made it happen. It is also no coincidence that, when the panorama imploded, the first instinct of many Czechoslovak citizens was to pick up where they had left off when it was erected.[134]

Notes

1. V. Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, trans. P. Wilson, rev. edn, *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2018), p. 359.
2. Normalisation in Slovakia had distinctive characteristics, which I will treat in a subsequent work. Also, see Adam Hudek's contribution to this volume.
3. See K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 162.
4. *Nymbursko*, 23 January 1969, p. 1.
5. Williams, *The Prague Spring*.
6. Ibid., p. 146.
7. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 1.
8. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 3; 8 October 1968, p. 1; 26 November 1968, p. 3; 3 December 1968, p. 1.
9. J. Bašta, '"Zlatý poklad" Fondu republiky z roku 1968', *Paměť a dějiny*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2008), p. 32; *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 4; 17 September 1968, pp. 1, 4; 5 November 1968, p. 4; 26 November 1968, p. 1.
10. See, for example, *Nymbursko*, 17 November 1968, p. 3; 23 January 1969, p. 1.
11. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 148.
12. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 1.
13. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 4.
14. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 1.
15. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 1.
16. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 3; 1 October 1968, p. 1; 5 November 1968, p. 1.
17. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 1.
18. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 4; 17 September 1968, p. 2; 15 October 1968, p. 1; 3 December 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, pp. 1–2; 23 January 1969, p. 2.

19. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 1; 5 November 1968, p. 1; 12 November 1968, p. 1; 8 October 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, p. 4; 6 February 1969, p. 3.

20. *Nymbursko*, 8 October 1969, p. 2; 15 October 1968, p. 2; 22 October 1968, p. 2.

21. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 4.

22. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 1; 1 October 1968, p. 1; 12 November 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, p. 1.

23. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 1.

24. *Nymbursko*, 15 October 1968, p. 1.

25. *Nymbursko*, 5 November 1968, p. 1. Masaryk was the founding father of the Czechoslovak state in 1918.

26. *Nymbursko*, 8 October 1968, p. 1; 15 October 1968, p. 2; 22 October 1968, p. 1; 5 November 1968, pp. 1, 4; 12 November 1968, pp. 3–4.

27. *Nymbursko*, 5 November 1968, p. 1; 12 November 1968, p. 3. Czechoslovak Legions had fought with the Entente against Austria-Hungary in the First World War.

28. *Nymbursko*, 12 November 1968, p. 4.

29. *Nymbursko*, 5 November 1968, p. 4.

30. *Nymbursko*, 22 October 1968, p. 1.

31. *Nymbursko*, 12 November 1968, p. 1; 19 November 1968, p. 4.

32. 'Rezoluce listopadového zasedání ÚV KSČ o hlavních úkolech strany', 17 November 1968, in J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Kapitulace (srpen-listopad 1968)* (Brno, 2001), pp. 585–610.

33. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 175–9.

34. *Nymbursko*, 3 December 1968, p. 1.

35. *Nymbursko*, 10 December 1968, p. 1.

36. Ibid.

37. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, p. 2.

38. *Nymbursko*, 10 December 1968, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 1; Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 189.

39. *Nymbursko*, 26 November 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, p. 1.

40. *Nymbursko*, 12 November 1968, p. 1; 10 December 1968, p. 1.

41. *Nymbursko*, 26 November 1968, pp. 1, 4; 3 December 1968, pp. 4–5.

42. *Nymbursko*, 17 September 1968, p. 2; 26 November 1968, p. 2; 10 December 1968, p. 2; 23 January 1969, p. 2.

43. 'Rezoluce listopadového zasedání', in Vondrová and Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Kapitulace*, pp. 585–610.

44. 'Prohlášení předsednictva ÚV KSČ k politické situaci', 4 January 1969, in J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa*: *Normalizace (listopad 1968–září 1969)* (Brno, 2003), pp. 122–3;

Nymbursko, 23 January 1969, p. 1; Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 184–6.

45. *Nymbursko*, 23 January 1969, p. 1; 30 January 1969, p. 1; 6 February 1969, p. 1; 20 March 1969, p. 1.
46. *Nymbursko*, 30 January 1969, p. 1.
47. *Nymbursko*, 6 February 1969, p. 2; 13 February 1969, p. 1; 20 February 1969, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 2.
48. *Nymbursko*, 30 January 1969, p. 1; 6 February 1969, p. 1.
49. *Nymbursko*, 20 February 1969, p. 1.
50. Ibid.
51. *Nymbursko*, 6 March 1969, p. 1.
52. See Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 144–98.
53. *Nymbursko*, 6 February 1969, p. 1; 20 February 1969, p. 3.
54. *Nymbursko*, 10 December 1968, p. 1; 13 February 1969, p. 1; 13 March 1969, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 1.
55. *Nymbursko*, 13 February 1969, p. 1; 20 March 1969, p. 1; 27 March 1969, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 1.
56. *Nymbursko*, 30 January 1969, p. 2; 6 February 1969, p. 1; 13 March 1969, p. 2; 27 March 1969, p. 2.
57. *Nymbursko*, 6 February 1969, p. 1; 20 March 1969, p. 3; 27 March 1969, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 1.
58. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 199.
59. 'Usnesení 122. schůze předsednictva ÚV KSČ k událostem z 28.–29. března 1969', 1 April 1969, in Vondrová and Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Normalizace*, pp. 280–1; *Nymbursko*, 10 April 1969, p. 1.
60. *Nymbursko*, 10 April 1969, p. 1.
61. Ibid.
62. *Nymbursko*, 17 April 1969, p. 1.
63. *Nymbursko*, 10 April 1969, p. 1; 17 April 1969, p. 1.
64. *Nymbursko*, 6 February 1969, p. 1; 22 February 1969, p. 1; 6 March 1969, p. 1.
65. *Nymbursko*, 10 September 1968, p. 3; 17 September 1968, p. 1; 1 October 1969, p. 1; 22 October 1968, p. 1; 5 November 1968, p. 1; 26 November 1968, p. 1; 3 December 1968, pp. 1, 5; 23 January 1969, p. 2; 30 January 1969, p. 1; 27 March 1969, p. 1; 3 April 1969, p. 3.
66. *Nymbursko*, 24 April 1969, p. 1.
67. Ibid.
68. *Nymbursko*, 15 May 1969, p. 1.
69. *Nymbursko*, 1 May 1969, p. 1.
70. *Nymbursko*, 15 May 1969, p. 1.
71. *Nymbursko*, 17 April 1969, p. 1; 1 May 1969, p. 1; 17 July 1969, p. 1.

72. *Nymbursko*, 24 April 1969, p. 2; 1 May 1969, p. 2.
73. *Nymbursko*, 8 May 1969, p. 1; 22 May 1969, p. 1.
74. *Nymbursko*, 15 October 1968, p. 1; 19 November 1968, p. 1; 17 April 1969, p. 1; 15 May 1969, p. 1.
75. *Nymbursko*, 1 May 1969, p. 1.
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80. *Nymbursko*, 10 April 1969, p. 1.
81. *Nymbursko*, 24 April 1969, p. 1.
82. *Nymbursko*, 1 May 1969, p. 1.
83. 'Realizační směrnice', 30 May 1969, in Vondrová and Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Normalizace*, pp. 468–77.
84. *Nymbursko*, 12 June 1969, p. 1.
85. *Nymbursko*, 5 June 1969, p. 1.
86. *Nymbursko*, 19 June 1969, p. 1; 26 June 1969, p. 1; 3 July 1969, p. 2; 10 July 1969, p. 2.
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94. *Nymbursko*, 31 July 1969, p. 1.
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104. *Nymbursko*, 28 August 1969, p. 1; 11 September 1969, p. 1; 18 September 1969, p. 1; 25 September 1969, p. 1.
105. *Nymbursko*, 28 August 1969, p. 1; Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 237.
106. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 238; *Nymbursko*, 11 September 1969, p. 1.

107. *Nymbursko*, 4 September 1969, p. 1; see Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 238–9.
108. *Nymbursko*, 18 September 1969, p. 1; 2 October 1969, p. 1.
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113. *Nymbursko*, 18 September 1969, p. 1.
114. *Nymbursko*, 28 August 1969, p. 1; 15 December 1969, p. 1.
115. *Nymbursko*, 2 October 1969, p. 2.
116. *Nymbursko*, 9 October 1969, p. 1; 6 November 1969, p. 1; 20 November 1969, p. 2; 27 November 1969, pp. 1, 3; 11 December 1969, p. 1; 15 December 1969, p. 1; 18 December 1969, p. 1; 29 December 1969, p. 1.
117. *Nymbursko*, 28 August 1969, p. 1; 23 October 1969, p. 1; 15 December 1969, p. 1.
118. *Nymbursko*, 25 September 1969, p. 1.
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121. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 234.
122. *Nymbursko*, 25 September 1969, p. 1.
123. *Nymbursko*, 9 October 1969, p. 1; see also 6 November 1969, p. 1, and 15 December 1969, p. 1.
124. *Nymbursko*, 24 July 1969, p. 1.
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126. *Nymbursko*, 21 August 1968, p. 1; 11 September 1968, p. 1.
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128. *Nymbursko*, 30 October 1969, p. 1.
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130. *Nymbursko*, 13 November 1969, p. 1.
131. *Nymbursko*, 20 November 1969, p. 1.
132. Havel, *Power of the Powerless*, p. 366.
133. See J. Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, trans. E. Kohák (Chicago, IL, 1996).
134. J. Krapfl, *Revolution with a Human Face: Politics, Culture, and Community in Czechoslovakia, 1989–1992* (Ithaca, NY, 2013).

The Ideological Face of Normalisation: Socialist Modernity and the 'Quiet Life'

Michal Pullmann

The political appeal of the 'quiet life' was a powerful device in the process of consolidation in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. Born of the military occupation of the country by Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, the normalisation regime turned out to be surprisingly stable over time, marginalising and displacing alternative paths of development and ideological variants, at least until the late 1980s. A crucial hallmark of these two decades was the patent ambiguity of the regime's conservative and modernising effects. The era was epitomised by a set of specific features of stability and gradual movement of conservative retrenchment towards an insistence on 'socialist modernity', the combination of which served to bolster a certain acceptance of the normalisation administration.[1] In this complex dynamic, the new Communist Party (KSČ) First Secretary from April 1969, Gustáv Husák, did not simply rely on Soviet military and ideological weaponry and the 'ruse' of rising standards of living; he also offered a distinct interpretation of the era that privileged particular responses and

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53

preferences. This is not to say that official constructions and ideological narratives were fully endorsed by the Czechoslovak population, but they were used as an authoritative discourse, interpreted and re-interpreted in everyday life. Although this discourse was scarcely believed in its literal meaning, it did become the hegemonic narrative justifying selective needs, values and ideological stances.

This chapter explores the form and evolution of official language and rhetoric after 1968, examining the role played by state ideology in the stability of the normalisation regime in Czechoslovakia. As often noted—including by Matthew Stibbe and Kevin McDermott in the introduction to this volume—the official doctrine and policies of normalisation were far removed from the utopian and fanatical excesses of the Stalinist era. Normalisers preferred the security of 'consolidation' carried out in an 'atmosphere of peace and order' that would enhance 'real existing socialism', a concept popularised in the Brezhnev years that denoted a developed, practical form of socialism on the road to communism. The normalised regime also sought to conceal physical violence; indeed, publicly rejecting it in order to create the impression of the happy 'quiet life'. The ideology of normalisation was directed not only against the reformism, turbulence and unpredictability of the Prague Spring, but also against the horrors of Stalinism and its mass mobilising campaigns. It was not enough for Husák to propagandise a sense of the 'quiet life' and 'normalcy'; he strove to imprint its basic elements into everyday life and common discourse to promote the purposes of normalisation and immunise the system against future crises.[2]

The supreme challenge was to achieve this desired outcome through a 'peaceful dictatorship' without resort to overt violence, but also without a functioning civil society and creative dialogue negotiating public identity. Ultimately, Husák settled on the creation of a 'welfare dictatorship' and the propagation of a particular form of popular culture.[3] The repressive consensus of the normalisation era rested on 'progressive' social measures and mass support for official popular culture with its illusion of harmony, all inextricably interwoven with a specific ideological language that most Czechs and Slovaks learned to vocalise perfectly well. I start this chapter by sketching the ideological foundations of the consolidation programme—the expectations of its leading architects, the basic principles of the concept and the repressive measures at the heart of the regime. But it was clear from the beginning that the normalisers had to translate their ideological programme into a shared experience of the people. Thus, in

the second part of the chapter I discuss the main strategies of consolidation—the containment of violence, the generous welfare policies and state support for both popular and 'high' culture. From this perspective, I attempt to explain the paradox of the stability and relative longevity of the system, and its abrupt demise in autumn 1989.

Husák and Consolidation

Soviet support for Husák and his accession to party First Secretary in April 1969 was in many ways surprising.[4] In 1968, neither was Husák an open critic of the Prague Spring, nor did he fully embody the pro-Moscow principles of 'socialist internationalism'. As an educated lawyer, outstanding communist intellectual and leading personality of the Slovak National Uprising of August 1944 and of the quasi-Slovak government after the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May 1945, he was arrested in 1951, condemned in a show trial as a 'Slovak bourgeois nationalist', tortured and humiliated, and spent eight years in prison in the 1950s. Though released and rehabilitated in the 1960s, he was not permitted to publish in party platforms until 1968. Only the Prague Spring brought him back into the upper echelons of the party and allowed him to implement one of his core political aims—Czechoslovak federation. Against this background, Husák's notion of 'normality' and his politics of consolidation are more comprehensible. It is entirely logical that Husák rejected Stalinist terror. In all likelihood, he never uttered this phrase, preferring instead euphemisms such as 'tragic experiences after February 1948' or the 'lawlessness' of the 1950s,[5] but for him Stalinist show trials represented the reversion of all norms of socialist legality and the disavowal of the goals of the communist project. Stalinist violence perverted the categories on which 'our whole civilisation grew up': truth and lies, guilt and innocence, law and lawlessness, virtue and crime.[6] In Husák's view, both Stalinist atrocities and post-Stalinist stagnation in the late 1950s considerably damaged and undermined the reputation of socialism.

At the same time, Husák occasionally warned of dangerous trends that threatened socialism and could eventually destroy it. During the Prague Spring, and even more urgently after it, he condemned the reform movement for its trenchant, and in his view excessive, criticism of the 'mistakes' and 'injustices of the 1950s' (codes for Stalinism), which, for him, portended the overthrow of socialism. Accordingly, it was imperative to adhere to the 'socialist line': strict Leninist 'democratic centralism' and

tight centralised command of the economy in domestic policies, and unconditional alliance with the USSR in international relations—'With the Soviet Union for All Time!' as the ubiquitous normalisation slogan went. Husák was convinced that democracy required stability and consolidation, for which the socialist state was an essential guarantee. Socialist citizens had the right to dispute and even to insist on their principles, but optimum political solutions must be sought and accomplished quietly and patiently within clear limits, so that socialist democracy would not revert to 'anarchy, disintegration, chaos, arbitrariness and new injustices'.[7]

Underpinning Husák's reasoning—and slightly at odds with his professed Leninism—was a deep suspicion of the masses and of the activist politics that threatened the basic precepts of the 'quiet life' under the socialist system. He decried the notion that the world could be reordered on the streets, disregarding the fundamental tenets of socialism and overlooking the fact that the Czechoslovak communist regime had itself come to power on the back of protests organised by 'Action Committees' and trade union militia in February 1948. 'The main duty of the party leadership', he declared in April 1969 on his accession to the post of party First Secretary, 'is to lead our nations out of the crisis; to guide our people, our republic to a peaceful day, to a tranquil life, so that every worker, peasant and member of the intelligentsia can concentrate on their work, so that we can think about all our problems in a calm atmosphere; we can debate, argue, even quarrel, but then find solutions, as in every consolidated and cultured socialist state'.[8]

It was in the context of the military occupation of Czechoslovakia that Husák strengthened this notion of stability. He operated in a country that was politically disillusioned. Hence, with the aim of reasserting public order, the 'leading role' of the party and firm fraternal relations with the USSR, he opposed all 'moments of disintegration, anarchy and intemperateness', to which he contrasted his vision of the 'quiet and sunny day, a better future'.[9] In other speeches he used variations on this theme: 'We can show all the people of our State how to proceed so that we can root out the cause of past crises, create an atmosphere of contentment, trust, certainty and optimism—conditions favourable for creative work and a happy life for our people'.[10] The imagery of normalised society thus manifested itself in the form of an idyllic summer day in which socialist citizens would live unobstructed by enemies, work peacefully, enjoy their leisure time and, in cultivated and respectful conversations, devise optimal democratic solutions under the auspices of a strong and protective socialist state.

The strength of the state was to be based on the control of violence and adherence to socialist legality. Whoever breaks the law, Husák cautioned, 'must reckon with the legal effects of such conduct'.[11] Undoubtedly, the pretensions of the normalised regime were authoritarian—the party was purged at the beginning of the 1970s, state borders were once again sealed, censorship of the media, culture and academia was re-established, and many journalists, intellectuals and scholars were fired. But within the limits of the authoritarian state, the system was couched in the vocabulary of a depoliticised democracy grounded in socialist legality.

'Lessons of the Crisis Development'

The political constellation in occupied Czechoslovakia, however, did not automatically favour Husák's theories and prescriptions. The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia played to a harsher brand of politics as represented by the hard-liners in the KSČ. Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s, they repeatedly suggested, had experienced a catastrophic decline of socialism, threatening the very survival of the system and its institutions, 'liquidating' honest communists and seriously undermining the alliance with the Soviet Union. Vasil Biľak, the leading arch-conservative with pretensions of playing a central role in the normalisation process, was taken aback, along with other 'super-normalisers', when in spring 1969 the Soviets settled on the 'moderate' Husák. The hard-liners portrayed the challenge of overcoming the Prague Spring in almost apocalyptic terms. The task was not simply to expel the reformers from their positions of authority and restore the partnership with the USSR, but to delegitimise the entire reformist programme on principle. In Husák's more considered view, the Prague Spring embodied an important attempt to overcome 'tutelage', 'errors' and 'deformations', but was misused and manipulated by 'anti-socialist forces' and hence turned chaotic. 'January was inevitable', he declared in 1970 using the term 'January' to denote the beginning of the Prague Spring.[12] However, it led to anarchy and collapse.[13] In contrast, Biľak and the hard-liners rejected the Prague Spring blueprint from its very inception and sought both an iron fist and a creed: a set of fixed beliefs about socialism and its recent history.

Towards the end of 1969, the Brezhnev leadership began to pressurise the Czechoslovak normalisers to draw up an official document, which would affirm the Kremlin's interpretation of contemporary events; namely, that the Prague Spring was a 'counter-revolution' and military

intervention was politically unavoidable and officially requested. The latter was a delicate issue, to say the least, since the 'letter of invitation' to Moscow, signed by Biľak and four other hard-liners (but not Husák) in summer 1968, remained secret. After tough internal negotiations and debates with the Soviet side, the official party analysis, entitled *Lessons of the Crisis Development in the Party and Society*, finally saw the light of day in December 1970.[14] In it, Biľak's uncompromising position was considerably stronger than Husák's more measured tones.

The charge against the Prague Spring was threefold. In the first instance, revisionism in the party and the reforms in politics, culture and the economy threatened the very existence of socialism. This framed the case against the Prague Spring in almost militaristic terms as a defence against the 'focused, well-organised, coordinated and controlled attacks of internal and external revisionist and right-wing opportunist forces'. Second, the authority of the KSČ and socialist state was placed in serious jeopardy, as the revisionists and anti-socialist groupings strove to 'paralyse [its] mission and activities' for the sake of a 'political about-turn'. These cliques stood accused of side-lining Communist Party and state security organs by the deliberate 'suspension of [their] capacity to act (*akceschopnost*)'. Third, the revisionists were censured for breaking the unshakable alliance with the Soviet Union. The 'abstract notion of [national] sovereignty' promoted by the Prague Spring was denounced as 'bourgeois propaganda', ignoring the 'class and internationalist essence of the socialist state'. The armed intervention of August 1968 was to be regarded as 'fraternal assistance', a concession which amounted to blatant subservience to the Brezhnev Doctrine of 'limited sovereignty'.[15]

Lessons of the Crisis Development also reaffirmed 'social security' and the 'establishment of peace and order' as reassuringly socialist principles,[16] rooting the rhetoric of normalisation in conservative values of 'order' in stark contrast to the revolutionary enthusiasm and upheaval of Stalinist times. Although the document was more Biľak's work than Husák's (there was no open rejection of Stalinist 'lawlessness', nor visions of an 'idyllic sunny day', typical for Husák), it entrenched an ideological language of normalisation framed around 'peace and order' and the repudiation of activism and violence. As *Lessons* put it, this redrawing of the ideological agenda fundamentally opposed the reformism of the Prague Spring and its 'atmosphere of hysteria, intimidation and terror', its 'chauvinistic campaigns', 'white terror', 'paralysis of the action capacities of the party' and the 'impudence [*troufalost*] of counter-revolutionary and utterly criminal

elements'. This interpretation allowed normalisers to present their policy not as an assault on democracy, but as a return to socialism, to a 'rich and versatile life for the citizens of our country… It is a path of honour and glory and of a future that leads to the fulfilment of the desires of every citizen to live a satisfied (*spokojený*) and happy life'.[17]

Husák and the Repressions

In this context, it was imperative to destroy the institutional background and influence of the Prague Spring reformists, and at the same time to avoid any activisation of the masses, even in the name of socialism. The chosen method was wide-scale demotions and reprisals. It is noteworthy that, according to two high-ranking insiders, the moderate normaliser Lubomír Štrougal and the disgraced reformer Čestmír Císař, the party purges were not the brainchild of the Kremlin. Inspiration came from within.[18] As a result, in the course of 1969 the majority of chief editors of prominent journals were sacked and replaced by more compliant functionaries; academic, artistic and intellectual circles were profoundly 'cleansed'. Repressions hit all important organisations and professions—trade unions, the educational system and the army. Even the secret services were not exempt. Purging took the form of 'screenings' (*prověrky*) at which party members, at least those who had not yet voluntarily left the KSČ, were expected to pledge allegiance to the new normalised interpretation of the Prague Spring and pay homage to Soviet 'fraternal assistance'. Although communists bore the brunt of the purges, pressures to conform also affected many non-party members. For example, school pupils and university students had to closely study *Lessons of the Crisis Development*.[19]

By 1970, these administrative campaigns were accompanied by criminal proceedings. Owing to Husák's aversion to show trials and his insistence on legal procedures, the hard-liners had to resort to state organs and the judicial system to initiate the prosecutions. This tactic meant that once the police had prepared documentation against oppositionists and passed it on to the courts, it was very difficult for Husák and other 'moderates' to intervene. Nevertheless, it is reported that he repeatedly voted against prosecutions and trials. For instance, when the party leadership discussed putting the petitioners of the 'Ten Point Appeal' on trial in summer 1970, the measure was approved by seven votes to four and it is alleged that Husák voted against.[20] A recent biographer also asserts that in May 1970 Husák proposed an amnesty, although his initiative came to naught.[21]

Surrounded by hard-liners, his room for manoeuvre was seemingly severely circumscribed. In public, at least, he endeavoured to downplay the significance of the proceedings, maintaining that they affected only proven criminals. At the Central Committee plenum in February 1972, he talked of 'a few tens' of arrested people who had committed 'verifiable criminal activities' and averred that in Czechoslovakia nobody was persecuted 'for their opinions or persuasions… neither for their opinions today, nor for their opinions in the years 1968–1969'.[22] This is not to say, of course, that Husák was an erstwhile 'liberal', who opposed authoritarian methods. But it does appear that at times he attempted to limit the worst effects of the repressions.

The prosecutions of the early 1970s, therefore, may be conceived as a compromise: the repressive organs intimidated all those who were regarded as dangerous to the new regime, as demanded by the hard-liners. But all this took place within a legal framework avoiding terror and show trials, which was Husák's distinct preference. The largest wave of lawsuits in Prague and Brno in 1972 fitted perfectly into this pattern. Here, the distribution of leaflets against the parliamentary elections in November 1971 was used by the police as a pretext to arrest approximately 150 people and charge them with producing and disseminating 'illegal writings'.[23] The trials were formally well prepared, generally kept secret (unlike the Stalinist show trials, they were not orchestrated and held in public), and passed off quickly in the summer, as people were enjoying their holidays and were thus less attentive. Altogether forty-six persons were sentenced to a total of 126 years in prison. As the proceedings started, Husák left the country for his annual vacation in the Soviet Union, giving rise to speculation that he was not fully behind the trials, or at least the severity of the sentences.[24] This supposed aversion, together with criticism from the West, might be the reason that such large-scale repression never recurred in normalised Czechoslovakia.

Containing Violence

The partial concealment and judicial nature of the repressions in early normalised Czechoslovakia, which so clearly differentiated them from the murderous Stalinist purges, were not only due to Husák's personal reticence or strategic concerns about the possible damage to the communist project among Western public opinion. From the late 1950s, East Central European state socialist regimes gradually modified socialist jurisprudence

as a reaction to Stalinist dogmatism and voluntarism, developing their own version of an authoritarian socialist *Rechtsstaat*.[25] While this did not necessarily converge with the liberal concept of the 'rule of law', it did differ markedly from the arbitrary, sweeping and indiscriminate repression of the Stalinist era. It was recognised that socialist legality should both prevent the abuse of power, so typical of Stalinist times, and boost the legitimacy of the socialist state. To be sure, this conception did little to challenge the political dominance of the KSČ, but socialist legality did seek to constrain the state apparatus and secret police in an attempt to prevent a return to the endemic illegality of Stalinism.[26]

The violation of civil rights and the use of physical violence continued to be a constituent part of the system, but the goal of the Czechoslovak normalisers after 1969 was to contain abuses within a sphere to which 'loyal citizens' had no access and in this way to promote and justify the concept of a 'harmonious life' under socialism.[27] The consolidation regime sought an ideal of a conflict-free and non-violent life, and therefore both the political leaders and law enforcement agencies were generally reluctant to condone harsh persecution of opponents and those with a different life-style. They did not simply aim at disciplinary coercion through intimidation. Repressions were—with some notable exceptions—carefully concealed. Concealment embraced not only judicial proceedings and information about alternative life-styles. To 'protect' society, the socialist state also created a system of expert institutions. The growing importance of scientific expertise and its practical impact on public administration and the judicial system might be regarded as a reaction to the rising complexity of modern societies.[28] In Czechoslovakia, this shift was visible particularly in the struggle against economic criminality, physical violence and so-called 'asocial' behaviour.[29] The burgeoning role of expertise did not diminish the repressive nature of the regime; what was new was the fact that violent practices were kept secret from 'decent citizens' and were directed against small, mainly marginal groups.

The central legitimising principle was expertise and state authority. For the sake of 'scientific management' (*vědecké řízení*), the state invested heavily in specialist institutions and thus assumed direct responsibility for public security and social well-being in line with scientific criteria. Apart from special schools, the prison system and psychiatric facilities, this expertise was used in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, to control the fertility of Roma women by involuntary sterilisation. Experts often regarded this regulatory intervention as legitimate and socially beneficial.[30] Roma,

'parasites', 'hooligans'—and in principle anyone who behaved contrary to accepted norms—were subject to thorough supervision by law enforcement organs. This approach, ratified by 'expert' advice and executed by the state, gained the approval of the majority of the population, who generally endorsed the monitoring and disciplining of 'subversive elements'.[31] In this sense, the regime was able to boast of a certain social consensus behind 'real existing socialism'.

The Husákite language of the 'quiet life' and 'peaceful work' was originally aimed at pacifying society after the military occupation of August 1968 and was intended as a symbolic tool for restoring stability and order. In the longer run, this ideological device proved to be a powerful stimulus for 'consolidation' not only at the beginning of the 1970s, but for the entire existence of the normalisation regime. Violence was moved to spheres where 'decent citizens' were not able (or willing) to see. At the same time, state intervention and coercion were targeted at marginal and non-conformist groups, a tactic that garnered a large measure of social approbation. Most Czechs and Slovaks did not literally believe in the mindlessly repeated ideological clichés, but they did broadly countenance the commitment of the socialist state to engage in socially accepted 'non-political' repression.[32] On the whole, this ideological strategy worked well until the end of the 1980s.

SOCIALIST MODERNITY

The contours of 'socialist modernity' in late communism can be captured in the varying forms of social and welfare policy (housing, education, leisure, consumption, popular and 'high' culture), which were evolving in the Soviet bloc from the late 1950s and early 1960s under the auspices of the 'strong' socialist state.[33] As an ideological alternative to the Western model of modernity, epitomised (in Eastern eyes) by unemployment, racial and gender exclusion, gross social inequalities and everyday criminal and domestic violence, socialist modernity raised the prospect of the 'good life' for well-rounded socialist citizens rooted in rational consumption, a cultured environment and both collective and individualistic goals. In contrast to the Stalinist version, the ideological intention was not to completely reshape society, but to respect the dominant needs of broad sectors of society while eliminating conspicuous forms of degradation, such as poverty, violence and unemployment. In this understanding, the late socialist system should not be regarded as 'under-developed' in the sense

of 'lacking' Western features of modernity, but rather should be conceived of as a distinctive alternative modernity, which in its Czechoslovak guise in the 1970s (though less so in the 1980s), was able to meet at least some of the socio-economic aspirations of the people.

To this end, the normalisation leadership worked tirelessly to promote predictability, social care and expertise, in place of activism and arbitrariness. The policy of consolidation in the years 1969–1989 was primarily designed to improve the state of material provisions and the social situation of the population.[34] It became most evident in the field of social policy, especially pro-natalist and family-oriented legislation, as Celia Donert also highlights in her contribution to this volume. In 1968, maternity leave was extended to twenty-six weeks and two years later maternity allowances of 500 crowns monthly were introduced for mothers with babies of up to one year. The allowance for every subsequent birth increased from 1000 to 2000 crowns. From 1973, monthly benefits were gradated: 90 crowns for one child rising to 1230 crowns for four children (the average monthly income was about 2000 crowns in 1970 and approximately 2700 crowns in 1980). Credits for young families (up to 30,000 crowns) were set for ten years with considerable reductions for every newborn child (a 2000-crown reduction for the first child and 4000 for each subsequent child). Pensions were increased, and factories and institutions had to expand their provisioning, health and leisure programmes for employees. House building, especially the huge complexes of panel blocks that sprung up on the outskirts of many towns and cities, boomed. In 1975, restrictions on pensions and health care in the countryside, typically in the farm cooperatives, were removed.[35]

This progressive social policy agenda reaffirmed the family-oriented, gender-conservative policy of the 'quiet life', for it suggested that there was a profound need for social support and stability and the normalised socialist state was capable of filling the gap.[36] Official discourses on family and social security were highly traditional,[37] but the pressure to attain stability was stronger than the gender-conservative beliefs of most normalisers. Regardless of family-oriented policies, normalisers trod carefully around the issue of divorced people and went as far as to raise benefits for single-parent families.[38] This allowed them to present their strategy not as an assault on the Prague Spring, but as a return to the needs of the 'broad masses' and an improvement of the lives of the many.

Similarly, the cultural policy of the normalisation era was attributable neither to the conservative taste of most normalisers nor to the

emancipatory energies of socialist doctrine, but to a specific fusion of the two. The state invested much time, money and effort in diverse aspects of popular culture from the idyllic imagery of socialist everyday life in television series, to popular music, weekend cottages and the expansion of leisure activities. Television series, for instance, sought both to inculcate visions of a better life and to relate to the everyday experiences of viewers, be they personal problems, sorrows, indecisiveness, fragile personal relations or intrigues at the workplace. Official ideology was largely ineffective as an authoritarian command, but became more compelling when translated into comprehensible, albeit banal, stories about the workplace, family life and neighbourhood concerns, where viewers could identify themselves with shared implicit values. Television programmes portrayed a world of harmonious personal relations, selfless help, material safety, attractive jobs and good education, and were watched by millions of Czechoslovak citizens.[39]

At the same time, normalisers fervently believed that 'high' culture should be brought to the 'masses'. To cite just two examples: first, a vast amount of fiction—classical and contemporary, domestic and foreign—was published in the 1970s and 1980s. For popular books, tens of thousands of copies were no exception.[40] The relatively low price of books and the generous network of public libraries promoted a vital reading culture in Czechoslovakia. Although deprived of texts written by banned authors, Czech and Slovak readers did have access to a wide range of literature and queueing for a book by their favourite writer in a bookshop or library became a common feature of Czechoslovak life.[41] Another example is the New Scene of the Czech National Theatre in Prague. This bold brutalist building, erected between 1977 and 1983,[42] was designed *inter alia* for the needs of *Laterna magika*, an avant-garde multi-media theatre established in the late 1950s and later used by the regime as a successful export commodity.[43] Both the brutalist architecture and the multi-media theatre within it perfectly embodied the ideological promise of the normalised communist regime: to foster 'high' culture, including the avant-garde, among the 'masses'. In a socialist state, 'high' culture should not remain a privilege of the few but should be accessible to all 'working people'.

Despite its paternalistic predilections, Czechoslovak normalisation should not be regarded as an 'era of stagnation' based solely on coercion and cultural conservatism. Rather, it should be seen as a complex and contradictory amalgam of the normalisers' traditionalist imagery (in terms of gender, social issues and artistic taste) with the remnants of radical

utopianism embedded in socialist doctrine (eliminating visible poverty, breaking down class distinctions and nurturing a form of 'cultural democracy').[44] As I have argued throughout this chapter, the ideological promise of normalisation, in which its adherents genuinely appeared to believe, relied on the image of a 'good life' for the many founded on citizens' everyday wishes and values, such as stable family life, decent housing and cultured personal taste. This calm and ordered life, free of the turbulence and unpredictability of the Prague Spring experiments, was to be achieved under the auspices of a strong socialist state, as adumbrated in the *Lessons of the Crisis Development*. Only in these conditions could the normalisers' 'holy triad' be ensured: 1. political stability based on the unchallengeable unity and leading role of the Communist Party; 2. material security grounded in the socialist economic structure of collective ownership; and 3. international solidarity rooted in Czechoslovakia's commitments to the socialist world system and the ineluctable alliance with the Soviet Union.

Speaking the Doctrine

In this context, the major dilemma for the normalisers—and one that proved ultimately elusive—was how to turn the 'creed of the winners' of the military occupation into the shared experience of the masses. That the language of normalisation was highly formalised and rigid, rather than creative and persuasive, was not in itself a disadvantage. Ideological phrases, slogans and clichés were unthinkingly reiterated in everyday life, sometimes even with slight mistakes, because they sounded like an authoritative discourse with higher validity. Words did not always refer to a firm content, and hardly anyone expected a fixed meaning in them.[45] In this way, the performative quality of the official language, its form, prevailed in everyday usage over the constative one, its meaning. The goal was not so much to win over the hearts and souls of the people, but to stabilise ('consolidate', 'normalise') the system, respect and promote a 'quiet life' for the population and eliminate political critiques and counter-narratives. This is not to say that normalisers were oblivious to socialist emancipation; only that they feared and therefore eschewed the spectre of socialism 'from below' with its participative activist approach and unforeseeable outcomes. For them, socialism was a radiant sunny day with people enjoying their work and leisure time, overseen by a strong paternalistic state ensuring happiness and well-being.

The hyper-normalised usage of communist language was of great importance. Paradoxically, it enabled many Czechoslovaks, particularly the youth, to adopt and legitimise a fairly broad range of non-conformist stances, such as interest in Western culture and personal advancement beyond collectivism, while at the same time regarding themselves as loyal socialist citizens. Anti-Western propaganda, to the extent that it penetrated popular consciousness, was not the result of indoctrination or lack of information; rather, paradoxically, it enabled people to introduce a great deal of Western culture, typically in clothing and popular music, into their daily lives and, crucially, to deflect suspicion that they were somehow jeopardising socialism. The expression of anti-Western clichés demonstrated publicly that the 'realm of evil' was elsewhere and that an individual's preference for Western jeans or rock music was just his or her personal choice within the socialist 'good life'. It is not surprising, then, that so many Czechoslovak citizens wore Western jeans and listened passionately to Western rock music in private but spoke official communist language when needed in public. That is why the majority of the population adopted the hyper-normalised language and used it on appropriate occasions, although they switched immediately to a different language at home, in school or in a restaurant. In short, most people held alternative non-conformist views on many issues and consumed non-socialist culture, while simultaneously regarding themselves as good socialist citizens.

This dialectic gave normalisation a peculiar strength, and yet it was always vulnerable to slight shifts in the meaning of ideological terminology. By the late 1980s with the emergence of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the ideological hegemony of the party began to fall apart. First, support from Moscow, on which the normalisation regime was almost totally dependent, withered away. Gorbachev's economic and political reforms de-legitimised many of the basic principles of the state socialist system, notably the dominance of collective ownership and the monopoly of power of the Communist Party. Second, the internal consensus started to disintegrate. Citizens increasingly viewed the official promise of a 'quiet life' beyond poverty and violence as unfulfilled. Comparisons with Western consumerism—facilitated by technological innovations—made the achievements of the socialist welfare state appear somewhat modest. And the brutality of the police and security organs against non-violent demonstrators in 1989, most tellingly in Prague on 17 November, ultimately destroyed the normalisers' vision of harmony and the 'peaceful life'.

Conclusion

The ideological promise of the 'quiet life' that underpinned the relative credence and stability of the normalisation system for almost two decades faded away in 1989, giving rise to the popular suspicion that it was none other than a 'bad fiction'. Its effect was certainly paradoxical. Because the 'achievements of socialism' had been presented as a form of government, fitting best the needs of the population and national state, its stabilising propensities prevailed over all alternative visions and critiques for twenty years. Yet, the unintended by-product was that when it collapsed in autumn 1989, it appeared not simply to be a failure of a particular political leadership or a specific economic policy, but the collapse of the entire governing system. This unforeseen dénouement cleared the way to a new settlement and a paradigm shift towards the market and liberal democracy, and later to fully-fledged capitalism.

Retrospectively, many Czechs and Slovaks remember and even appreciate the benefits of normalisation policies, especially in the private realm of family life, leisure time and technological advancement in everyday life.[46] Alongside the retrospective renunciation of prominent communists and the memory of consumer shortages, Czechs also recall with a certain nostalgia the stability, job security, egalitarianism and free time that normalisation offered them. Or they just recollect that 'we had more fun'.[47] These traces in individual and collective memory could be regarded as additional evidence of the influence that normalisation ideology had on the stability of the Czechoslovak communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s. It is definitely inadequate to argue that the adaptation or approval of the Czechoslovak population was enforced solely through coercion and the fulfilment of material interests.[48] Husák's promise of the 'quiet life' also played a considerable role in the relative stability and longevity of the normalisation regime in post-1968 Czechoslovakia.

Notes

1. K. McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–1989: A Political and Social History* (London, 2015), pp. 152–81.
2. K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 59.
3. The phrase 'welfare dictatorship' (*Fürsorgediktatur*) is borrowed from K. H. Jarausch, 'Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship', in

K. H. Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York and Oxford, 1999), pp. 47–69.

4. In the following paragraphs, I paraphrase my own analysis of why Husák proved attractive to the Soviets. See M. Pullmann, 'Gustáv Husák (1913–1991): Der Herr mit Vergangenheit', in M. Sabrow and S. Schattenberg (eds), *Die letzten Generalsekretäre: Kommunistische Herrschaft im Spätsozialismus* (Göttingen, 2018), pp. 145–72.

5. Among Husák's other euphemisms for Stalinist terror were phrases such as 'mistakes and errors made in the 1950s'. See G. Husák, *Speeches and Writings* (Oxford, 1986), p. 22.

6. G. Husák, 'Prípad na zamyslenie (Spomienky na Vlada Clementisa)', *Kultúrny život: Týždenník o kultúre, literatúre, umení a spoločnosti*, vol. 22, no. 38 (1967), pp. 1–10 (here p. 10).

7. These quotes are taken from a speech in May 1968 at the peak of the Prague Spring, well before the post-occupation period. See M. Zemko, 'Od stráníckeho reformátora k normalizátorovi. K publicistike Gustáva Husáka v rokoch 1963–1968', in S. Michálek and M. Londák (eds), *Gustáv Husák: Moc politiky, politik moci* (Bratislava, 2013), pp. 527–42 (here p. 540).

8. G. Husák, 'Musíme hledat poctivé komunistické řešení: Závěrečné slovo na Plenárním zasedání ÚV KSČ 17. dubna 1969', in G. Husák, *Projevy a stati: Duben 1969–leden 1970* (Prague, 1970), pp. 10–34 (here p. 21).

9. G. Husák, 'Hlavní úkoly strany v současné situaci: Referát na Plenárním zasedání ÚV KSČ 29. května 1969', in Husák, *Projevy a stati*, pp. 65–112 (here pp. 76 and 112).

10. Husák, *Speeches and Writings*, p. 58.

11. G. Husák, 'O současné situaci a dalších úkolech strany: Referát na plenárním zasedání ÚV KSČ 25. září 1969', in Husák, *Projevy a stati*, pp. 252–97 (here p. 256).

12. Alexander Dubček was appointed First Secretary of the KSČ on 5 January 1968, setting the reforms in motion. For details, see McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia,* pp. 122–7; and Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 63–7.

13. 'Proč byl leden nutný? Rozhovor Rudého práva se soudruhem Gustávem Husákem', *Rudé právo*, 5 January 1970, pp. 1 and 3.

14. *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ: Rezoluce k aktuálním otázkám jednoty strany* (Prague, 1971).

15. Ibid., pp. 8, 22–3, 27 and 31.

16. T. Dickins, 'The Impact Factor of the Language of Czechoslovak Normalization: A Study of the Seminal Work, *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ*', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 93, no. 2 (2015), pp. 213–50, here esp. p. 234.

17. *Poučení z krizového vývoje*, pp. 18–19, 24, 27 and 44.

18. Williams, *The Prague Spring*, p. 227.

19. Ibid., pp. 226–36; McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia,* pp. 156–9; J. Cuhra, *Trestní represe odpůrců režimu v letech 1969–1972* (Prague, 1997).

20. Although there is no direct evidence of Husák's negative voting, several witnesses have speculated about it. See, for example, Cuhra, *Trestní represe*, p. 38.

21. M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák* (Prague, 2017), p. 421.

22. Cuhra, *Trestní represe*, pp. 61–2.

23. For details, see J. Pažout, *Trestněprávní perzekuce odpůrců režimu v Československu v období takzvané normalizace (1969–1989)* (Prague, 2017), pp 56–8, 134 and 176–8; and Cuhra, *Trestní represe*, pp. 58–69.

24. Cuhra, *Trestní represe*, p. 65.

25. M. Kopeček, 'Was there a socialist *Rechtsstaat* in late communist East Central Europe? The Czechoslovak case in a regional context', *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2020), pp. 281–96 (here p. 287). Although the term 'socialist *Rechtsstaat*' was coined during the *perestroika* era, it can be used as a tool to understand the transformations of socialist law between the 1960s and 1980s. Hence, Kopeček rejects labelling the 'consolidation' régime as 'neo-Stalinist'. See ibid., p. 288.

26. Already in the 1990s, non-Czech historians emphasised the differences between the normalisation and Stalinist regimes, notably the fact that Husák and his co-normalisers tried 'to avoid recourse to sweeping, indiscriminate terror' and 'conducted [the] purge without arbitrary violence'. See Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 51 and 236. Symbolic of this shift to socialist legality in the USSR itself was the renaming and downgrading of the secret police from a Ministry (MGB) to a mere Committee (KGB) as early as 1954.

27. For details, see M. Pullmann,'"Ruhige Arbeit" und die Einhegung der Gewalt: Ideologie und gesellschaftlicher Konsens in der spätsozialistischen Tschechoslowakei', in V. Zimmermann and M. Pullmann (eds), *Ordnung und Sicherheit, Devianz und Kriminalität im Staatssozialismus: Tschechoslowakei und DDR 1948/49–1989* (Göttingen, 2014), pp. 39–56.

28. V. Sommer et al. (eds), *Řídit socialismus jako firmu: Technokratické vládnutí v Československu, 1956–1989* (Prague, 2019).

29. See also M. Kotalík, *Rowdytum im Staatssozialismus: Ein Feindbild aus der Sowjetunion* (Berlin, 2019).

30. On the involuntary sterilisation of Roma women, see V. Sokolová, *Cultural Politics of Ethnicity: Discourses on Roma in Communist Czechoslovakia* (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 207–46. Also C. Donert, 'Creating "Citizens of Gypsy Origin": Ethnicity, Planning and Population Control in Socialist Czechoslovakia', in C. Brenner and M. Schulze Wessel (eds),

Zukunftsvorstellungen und staatliche Planung im Sozialismus: Die Tschechoslowakei im ostmitteleuropäischen Kontext 1945–1989 (Munich, 2011), pp. 89–114 (here pp. 111–12), and Donert's chapter in this volume.

31. Public opinion surveys from the early 1980s indicate general popular support for the state's approach to youth criminality (and thus also to 'hooliganism'). See P. Vojna, *Kriminalita—skutečnost a právní vědomí* (Prague, 1984), pp. 293–339.

32. Admittedly, families and communities reacted less positively when their own sons or neighbours were targeted. See Kotalík, *Rowdytum im Staatssozialismus*, pp. 265–70.

33. Key examples include S. E. Reid and D. Crowley (eds), *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe* (Oxford and New York, 2000); and K. Pence and P. Betts, 'Introduction', in K. Pence and P. Betts (eds), *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2008), pp. 1–34.

34. It is interesting that, after unity and the leading role of the party, the most prominent topics in Husák's speeches were the economic situation and the enumeration of all the measures undertaken by the state to enhance the social situation of the population. See Husák, *Speeches and Writings*.

35. L. Kalinová, *Konec nadějím a nová očekávání: K dějinám české společnosti 1969–1993* (Prague, 2012), pp. 87–9 and 164; J. Rákosník and R. Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu: Populační růst a instituce manželství v českých zemích 1918–1989* (Prague, 2016), esp. pp. 59–74. On housing, see also Miroslav Vaněk's chapter in this volume.

36. B. Havelková, 'The Three Stages of Gender in Law', in H. Havelková and L. Oates-Indruchová (eds), *The Politics of Gender Culture under State Socialism: An Expropriated Voice* (London and New York, 2014), pp. 31–56.

37. Havelková speaks of the 're-traditionalisation of the law and legal discourse on the family' and sees the generous provisions of the normalisation regime as 'gender-conservative'. See Havelková, 'The Three Stages', pp. 45 and 47. Also Celia Donert's chapter in this volume.

38. Some experts advised against excessive support for single-parent families. See Rákosník and Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu*, pp. 165–6.

39. P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY and London, 2010); P. Bren, 'Weekend Getaways: The *Chata*, the *Tramp*, and the Politics of Private Life in Post-1968 Czechoslovakia', in D. Crowley and S. Reid (eds), *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in Eastern Bloc* (Oxford and New York, 2002), pp. 123–40. Re-runs of several normalisation TV series also enjoyed massive popularity in the 1990s and 2000s.

40. J. Trávníček and Z. Šimeček, *Knihy kupovati… Dějiny knižního trhu v českých zemích* (Prague, 2014), pp. 315–80.
41. Like Soviet readers, Czechs and Slovaks were also enthusiastic consumers of contemporary Western fiction. See A. Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London, 2009) p. 589.
42. R. Biegel and R. Sedláková, *Nová scéna Národního divadla* (Prague, 2010).
43. L. Česálková and K. Svatoňová, 'Scenographic engineer Josef Svoboda and *Laterna Magika* as a creative laboratory under state socialism', *Theatre and Performance Design*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2020), pp. 243–62.
44. See the similar argumentation in M. Sandle, 'Brezhnev and Developed Socialism: The Ideology of *Zastoi*?', in E. Bacon and M. Sandle (eds), *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (Basingstoke and New York, 2002), pp. 165–87.
45. Quotations or references to Lenin and Brezhnev, as well as phrases like 'the bright future' or 'dialectical approach', were used not only in official ideological statements, but could be heard even at rock concerts or were reproduced in academic articles on economics arguing for higher wage differentials. See M. Pullmann, *Konec experimentu: Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu* (Prague, 2011).
46. M. Vaněk and P. Mücke, *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society* (Oxford 2016), pp. 43–68 and 145–68.
47. Ibid., pp. 141–4.
48. M. Christian, '"It Is Not Possible to Allow Past Mistakes to Come Again": Recruitment Policy in the CPCS in the 1970s and 1980s', in R. Bergien and J. Gieseke (eds), *Communist Parties Revisited: Sociocultural Approaches to Party Rule in the Soviet Bloc, 1956–1991* (New York and Oxford, 2018), pp. 46–71.

The Leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia During Normalisation: Stability and Change

Martin Štefek

The political systems of Eastern bloc states were designed to mirror the Soviet institutional model. After the establishment of one-party dictatorships in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, a strict Stalinisation process ensued by which the infant socialist regimes adopted many basic tenets of both Soviet party structure and party-state relations. Moscow's new allies were permitted, however, to retain certain specific constitutional arrangements (unitary versus federal, individual versus collective head of state, unicameralism versus bicameralism); and they differed in political culture, character of party system, degree of industrialisation and scope of

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collectivisation, coercion and control. Furthermore, the Soviet model was not inert. On the contrary, its internal functioning varied over time. In particular, Nikita Khrushchev's decentralisation experiments in the mid-1950s and early 1960s motivated reformers in the satellite states, notably Czechoslovakia.[1] Yet, Khrushchev's fall and the appointment of Leonid Brezhnev in October 1964 signified a gradual retreat from innovation. Reformist ideas in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) in the mid-1960s were rooted in the initiatives of the late Khrushchev era, but the Prague Spring in 1968 collided with the burgeoning anti-reform milieu in the USSR under Brezhnev. In these circumstances, the liberalising measures of Alexander Dubček and his colleagues in Prague and Bratislava were effectively doomed.

Although there were no major institutional revisions in the internal party structure during the Prague Spring, the logic of the system changed markedly. First, Central Committee plena became more deliberative and authoritative bodies—the previously unbalanced relationship between the plenum and the Presidium of the Central Committee was even conceded by Presidium members in a letter directed to the basic organisations of the KSČ in March 1968.[2] Second, the Secretariat, which ran day-to-day affairs in the party, was partially paralysed, no meetings being held from 28 February to 18 April.[3] Third, in accordance with the official reform document, the 'Action Programme', the government, led from April 1968 by Prime Minister Oldřich Černík, started to promote itself as the highest political executive organ.[4] Finally, the party leadership modified the key power instrument—the *nomenklatura* system, by which elite positions in the state machinery and economy were reserved for communist appointees. The crisis of the *nomenklatura* system in 1968–1969 was related to the democratisation of the party, the liberalisation of the mass media, the pluralisation of society and the decentralisation of the economy. Hence, it is hardly surprising that Moscow regarded the Prague Spring as an extremely serious challenge—on a par with the Hungarian Revolution of 1956—to the Soviet political model that had evolved in Eastern Europe since the late 1940s.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the restructuring of the KSČ's leading organs after the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion was a seminal precondition for the normalisation of Czechoslovakia in accordance with Soviet expectations. By analysing the personnel, institutional and functional changes inside the party after 1968, I provide a 'top-down' perspective on the restoration, consolidation and subsequent maintenance of the

leading role of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, arguably the prime goal of Gustáv Husák's 'normalised' regime. The aim is to explain the role of the KSČ leadership in the normalisation process, as well as aspects of its stability from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. The chapter explores four main themes: personnel and institutional fluctuations in the party after the invasion; the everyday operation of elite party organs in the 1970s and 1980s; the *nomenklatura* system; and the international and domestic determinants of change after 1985. It concludes by arguing that 'normalisation', even when investigated in a purely 'top-down' manner, defies attempts to cast it as an unfluctuating monolithic response to the challenges posed to communist rule in the ČSSR by the events of 1968.

Personnel and Institutional Changes after the Invasion

The Husák leadership was unprecedentedly stable in comparison to its immediate predecessors. During the eighteen years from the 14th Congress of the KSČ in May 1971 to the fall of the regime in 1989 only twenty men became full members of the Presidium, which typically was composed of eleven members. In contrast, between the 13th and 14th Congress (1966 and 1971) twice as many officials held office in the highest party organ. During the Prague Spring, the Kremlin was alarmed not only by the actions of particular leaders and the factionalism inside the top bodies of the KSČ, but also by a new practice in the party: the election, rather than selection, of regional bosses. Moreover, Brezhnev was well aware of the fact that democratically elected delegates to the party's 14th Extraordinary Congress, scheduled to convene in September 1968, would have supported a reform-leaning Central Committee. As such, the gathering could not be allowed to take place.

As Kieran Williams has noted, '[t]he armed intervention was intended to install a more reliable regime in Prague, to intimidate the "counter-revolutionary" forces into submission, and signal to the world that the Soviet Union would only enter détente from a position of strength, with its sphere of influence unassailable and united'.[5] The invasion on 20–21 August 1968 can be considered a military success, but a political disaster. In the hectic early hours of 21 August, the pro-Soviet 'healthy forces' in the KSČ Presidium were outvoted seven to four and were thus unable to remove Dubček and establish a Moscow-friendly 'revolutionary

government of workers and peasants'. Moreover, the Presidium prepared a statement denouncing the occupation. Neither did the military action prevent the clandestine convening of the 14th Extraordinary Congress in the Prague working-class district of Vysočany, which elected a new reform-oriented Central Committee and confirmed Dubček as First Secretary. In these unforeseen circumstances, the Soviets were forced to negotiate with the incumbent leaders. As mass passive resistance raged at home, Dubček and the entire Czechoslovak executive were transported to the Kremlin and, on 26 August, more or less compelled to sign the top secret 'Moscow Protocol'.[6]

The Protocol had an immediate impact on the composition of the highest political organs. The new Central Committee had to be dissolved and the congress of the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), held from 26–29 August in Bratislava, declared the Vysočany Congress null and void.[7] Slovak delegates also elected Husák to replace Vasil Biľak, the prominent pro-Soviet hard-liner, as First Secretary of the KSS, although the latter retained his seat on the KSČ Presidium.[8] With this change, Husák joined the highest circle of leaders. In addition, two outspoken reformers, František Kriegel and Čestmír Císař, were removed from the Presidium.[9] However, the Soviets and their Czechoslovak collaborators did not have everything their own way. On 31 August, the Central Committee co-opted eighty new members, fifty of whom had been elected by the pro-Dubček 14th Congress. Similarly, the newly expanded Presidium, consisting of twenty-one members, contained ten chosen by the congress. These decisions were severely criticised by the Soviets.

It soon became evident that the unwieldy Presidium was largely dysfunctional. Therefore, in September an informal 'Five' (Dubček, Černík, Husák, Josef Smrkovský and Ludvík Svoboda) was established, with Soviet blessing, inside the Presidium. On 8 October, the 'Five' was extended to the 'Eight' with the addition of Evžen Erban, Štefan Sádovský and Lubomír Štrougal.[10] This group then constituted the Executive Committee which effectively substituted for the Presidium. It met twenty times during its existence from December 1968 to April 1969. In fact, the Presidium merely approved decisions enacted by the superordinate Executive Committee. In this extremely fluid and tense period, the emerging 'realists'—Husák, Štrougal, Černík and Svoboda—dominated the Executive Committee. As the then KGB head Yuri Andropov stated in December 1968, the 'healthy forces in the leadership (Biľak, [Alois] Indra) understood that they had to unite with the realists… against the right (Dubček,

Smrkovský and [Václav] Slavík)'.[11] The 'realists' created a new core leadership, occupying a middle position between the essentially anti-reform Bil'ak faction on the one hand and the vaguely defined, but manifestly pejorative, 'right' on the other. The main figures of the group, Husák and Štrougal, had been reasonably sympathetic towards reform during 1968. Their subsequent 'realism' rested on the fact that they perfectly understood the post-invasion power constellation and political limits imposed by the Kremlin.

In the months after the invasion, Dubček served as a reluctant executor of Soviet orders, a stance that Moscow could not tolerate indefinitely. The perfect pretext for his ouster came in March 1969 with the mass anti-Russian protests that erupted after the victory of the Czechoslovak ice hockey team over the USSR in the world championships in Stockholm.[12] Following scant prior consultation, the Kremlin favoured the 'realist' Husák as the candidate for the highest party post.[13] He was duly elected First Secretary at the Central Committee plenum in mid-April 1969, together with a new Presidium. It consisted of members of the Executive Committee without the reformer Smrkovský (though still with Dubček), complemented by Biľak and a few other hard-liners. Dubček retained full membership until September 1969, but the purge at the elite level was almost complete.[14] At the regional level, more than four hundred employees of the party apparatus were removed together with many local secretaries.[15] To divest the party as a whole of 'rightists', the leadership, as we shall see below, planned a massive purge of the rank-and-file membership.

Everyday Operation of the Leading Party Organs

Institutionally, the political system of Czechoslovakia changed with the federalisation of the country in January 1969. According to the amended constitution, the Czech National Council complemented the existing Slovak National Council. The unicameral Czechoslovak parliament, the National Assembly, was transformed into the bicameral Federal Assembly. Separate Czech and Slovak governments were established. Functionally, however, little changed for two main reasons. First, the most important power centre—the KSČ—was not federalised, regardless of the creation of a short-lived Czech Party Bureau in September 1968. The federalisation of the constitutional façade satisfied long-standing Slovak demands, but did not bring about a significant functional shift. Second, a special committee set up in 1970 and led by Husák—paradoxically one of the main

adherents of federalisation during 1968–1969—proposed to 'rationalise' the division of power between the federal and the republic governments. This 'rationalisation' meant, in effect, a recentralisation of authority in favour of the Federal government over the republic cabinets.[16]

In the important realm of ideology, the Husák regime did not initiate a full-scale return to pre-1968 norms, although in many ways party structure and practices did revert to the patterns of the pre-Dubček era. This retrenchment was implemented by the Husák leadership, with considerable assistance from the Soviet Union, in the 'consolidation' period between 1969 and 1971. For instance, Czechoslovak officials utilised Soviet experience in bringing the mass media under party control.[17] The resumption of censorship and removal of the heads of television, radio and key newspapers, as well as a purge of editorial staff, satisfied crucial Soviet demands. The KSČ also required Moscow's guidance in dealing with organisational issues in the party apparatus.[18] In practice, constitutional institutions rapidly became—unconstitutionally—subordinate to the party after the short Prague Spring interlude. As I shall demonstrate later, all authoritative positions in the executive and legislative branches were dispensed on the recommendations of the Central Committee using the *nomenklatura* system. The actions of the President (a largely ceremonial role assumed by Husák in 1975), the Czech and Slovak governments and the federal and national parliaments were directed by the party leadership.

According to party statutes, the KSČ congress, held every five years, elected the highest party organ—the Central Committee.[19] Its plenum then elected the members of the Presidium, the Secretariat and the Central Control and Revision Commission. In reality, however, the process was the inverse. The uppermost echelons of the party leadership (usually the Presidium) without exception coopted themselves before the congress, and the Presidium commonly agreed on minor personnel changes in the Secretariat. Central Committee plena then formally and routinely ratified all proposals. Likewise, the Presidium prepared a detailed minute-by-minute congress schedule and coordinated a closed ballot for the formal election of the Central Committee, a direct reversal of the democratic praxis initiated in 1968.

After the dissolution of the Executive Committee in April 1969, the most powerful political body in Czechoslovakia was once again the Presidium. Its personnel symbolised the dual structure of the political system and the party's absorption of the state. After the 14th Congress in May 1971, the Presidium consisted of the General Secretary, selected

secretaries of the Central Committee (usually two), the President of Czechoslovakia, the Prime Minister of the Federal Government, the Czech and Slovak Prime Ministers, the chair of the Federal Assembly, the chair of the Czech National Council, the head of the Prague City Committee and the chair of the Trade Unions. The Secretariat consisted of the General Secretary, all departmental secretaries, the chief editor of the party newspaper *Rudé právo* and other officials. Even though the agendas of the Presidium and Secretariat differed significantly, the division between them was blurred. In fact, the regular sessions of the Presidium took place not only with its full-members (eleven to fifteen), but also Presidium candidates (from three to six), all secretaries (from six to ten) who directed the departments of the Central Committee, and the editor-in-chief of *Rudé právo*. Members of the government and other leading officials could occasionally be invited as well. While the Secretariat dealt largely with intra-party organisational affairs, cadre and press policy, the Presidium oversaw a wide range of issues: foreign policy, economic planning, security affairs, propaganda, cadre policy and food supply.

On average, Presidium sessions took place once a week. In the leading group, the position of the General Secretary was special: he presided over the meetings and set the agenda, even though the Presidium worked collectively. Full-members spoke preferentially to non-members, but all officials present could take part in discussions. Only full-members had the right to vote, but it is noteworthy that the Presidium rarely put any matter to the vote. The consent of the Presidium preceded the decision-making processes of the governments and parliaments. As for the legislative process, the Presidium seldom debated and confirmed ordinary legal proposals. Rather, their members prepared general guidelines for particular policy-making. In the case of laws of great importance (for instance the Five-Year Plan), the Presidium discussed proposals initially elaborated by the Federal government and then further refined by the corresponding department of the Central Committee. Thus, the professional apparatus of the Central Committee departments was a pivotal component in the leading role of the party. Apparatus officials (*apparatchiki*) were not formally elected: they were professional employees of the party. At the beginning of the 1970s, the Central Committee in Prague employed more than 800 officials.[20] This apparatus formed a key mechanism for the functioning of the party at all levels. In this sense, the apparatus was a kind of 'subsystem' within the system.

In his famous analysis of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Michael Gehlen enumerated four functions of the party: political socialisation, political recruitment, goal specification and goal attainment.[21] The apparatus was involved in the performance of all these areas. Central Committee departments regularly oversaw agenda-setting, supervised the top-down implementation of decisions and had considerable impact on cadre policy. In addition, *apparatchiki* heavily influenced leading officials by providing vital information and data.[22] Last but not least, the structure of the apparatus partly mirrored the executive branch of the political system. Functionally, several departments substituted for the legal position of ministries. While some departments dealt solely with intra-party affairs or propaganda, at least half of them focused on a particular policy area (foreign affairs, the economy or agriculture). For example, in practice the Minister of Foreign Affairs was subordinate to the secretary of the Central Committee department for international affairs. Similarly, in terms of decision-making the Finance Minister was an uneven political partner to the secretary of the Central Committee department for the economy, even though ministries had both considerable power to initiate and implement policies. Of course, this dual structure lent itself to conflictual relationships. Compared to the 1960s 'pluralistic authoritarianism', which permitted various groups to take part in the political process, the era of normalisation was characterised by a relatively closed 'input side' that was unconducive to external independent impetuses. Yet the model of the 1970s and 1980s was neither monolithic nor completely sealed. Rather, the Presidium's policies were the outcome of highly intricate balancing acts between the interests of the Soviet Union, the party apparatus, regional party structures, ministries, the State Planning Commission, the trade unions and large enterprises. For example, the collapse of the Seventh Five-Year Plan in the early 1980s could be interpreted both as a failure of economic policies and as a lack of authority of the party and state in relation to the lower levels.[23]

Certainly, the Presidium was the dominant centre of power in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s and 1980s, but its decisions must be assessed from the perspective of conflicts among relevant institutions and individuals. Crucially, the Presidium was rarely united. On the surface, the normalised leadership gave the impression of classical Marxist-Leninist unity. Internally, however, it was factionalised from the start between the pro-Moscow group represented by Biľak, Indra and the KGB confidants Antonín Kapek and Miloš Jakeš on the one hand,[24] and the 'realists'

Husák, Štrougal and Petr Colotka on the other. Moreover, members of the collective leadership were not equal. Central Committee secretaries with full-membership in the Presidium exerted more influence, notably Biľak during the 1970s and 1980s, while full-members holding governmental office could be weaker than the powerful *apparatchiki*. The position of the Federal Prime Minister was special. Štrougal was a strong figure, who forged a pragmatic tandem with Husák against the 'dogmatic wing'. But, as Štrougal confessed, 'the Prime Minister had to avoid taking steps which could be construed as disrespectful of party guidelines'.[25]

These subterranean factional conflicts were displayed as early as 1970 during the Presidium debates on the canonical ideological text of normalisation: *Lessons of the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the XIII Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia*. This overtly antireformist document not only reinterpreted the past, but also marked the domestic boundaries of socialism for the future. In the draft discussions, Štrougal warned that a narrow conception of socialism would seriously complicate future development: 'The [Stalinist] trials of the 1950s cuffed the hands of the leadership. Our analysis [of the Prague Spring] today should not bind the legs of future leaders'.[26] However, a decade later Štrougal himself experienced the inauspicious legacy of this rigid ideological pamphlet. As Vladimir Kusin aptly noted: '[t]he basic confines are set by Moscow while the scope of elasticity derives primarily from the attitude of the domestic agency. Moscow provides the bottle, the national leadership the wine'.[27] As we have shown above, the 'restoration' of socialist order was the prime goal of the Husák leadership after 1969. But the actions of the KSČ in many policy spheres were heavily circumscribed by the 'spectre of 1968'.

The crucial area of social and economic policy exemplifies the impact of these self-imposed limits. Initially, economic performance in the first half of the 1970s was generally positive. Following the termination of economic reform in 1969–1970, the Husák administration was well aware that it could ill afford any social turmoil. Hence, improvement of living standards rapidly became a top priority.[28] As Milan Šimečka remarked as early as 1979, the state exchanged welfare for the loyalty of the people.[29] Similarly, for Kusin 'a normalized Czechoslovak citizen was a well fed and clad man who produces and consumes, but abdicates political aspiration'.[30] Although this 'social contract' is not the only explanation for the relative success of normalisation, it is obvious that economic welfare was vital for the stability of the post-invasion regime. To illustrate, wages increased by

25.9 per cent between 1970 and 1975 while the prices of goods remained stable. Consumption increased as well.[31] Between 1971 and 1976 more than six hundred thousand flats were constructed.[32]

This relative economic prosperity and stability were, however, inherently fragile. By the late 1970s GDP was decreasing, supply shortages and inflated prices of a range of consumer goods were beginning to bite and by the turn of the decade the economy was showing signs of decline.[33] Dissatisfaction with the situation gradually rose, but the repressive regime did not face open popular discontent until 1988. Moreover, economic problems never became a burning issue for the weak 'dissident' opposition. On the contrary, the leadership was well aware that 'popular opinion' conflated socialism with social security.[34] Still, the communist elite was confronted with the desperate need for modernisation. From 1979, the Presidium and the Federal government pondered the cumbersomely entitled *Package of Measures for the Improvement of the Planning Direction System of the National Economy*. Its final draft, endorsed in 1980, epitomised the conflictual relationship between its two main proponents—the party apparatus and the government. First and foremost, the document avoided the taboo word 'reform'. While Prime Minister Štrougal strove for a degree of structural change, especially a form of autonomy for key enterprises,[35] the economic department of the Central Committee, led by the conservative Josef Kempný, and later by Jakeš, opposed any radical transformation of the system. The *Package* was a profoundly complex compromise mirroring these conflicts. On the one hand, the mere 'improvement' of the existing planning system was the prime aim of the measures, but on the other, the document acknowledged structural problems in virtually all areas of the economy.[36] Nonetheless, before 1985 no actor or institution was allowed to propose, let alone implement, a more radical programme of reform. As we shall demonstrate below, the loosening of external pressures during the Gorbachev era was the crucial precondition for agenda-setting change in Czechoslovakia.

The Nomenklatura System

The system of *nomenklatura* was, as Thomas Rigby accurately stated, 'one of the basic constituent elements of the Soviet socio-political order'.[37] The *nomenklatura* has been studied both as a mechanism and as a sociological category.[38] Michael Voslensky, the author of a classic treatise on the subject, defines the *nomenklatura* as '(1) [the] list of key positions,

appointments to which are made by higher authorities in the party; and (2) lists of persons appointed to those positions or held in reserve for them'.[39] Although the system of appointments evolved over the course of decades, the Communist Party never renounced its determining role in staffing the upper echelons of the political system, economy and societal organisations. In Czechoslovakia, immediately after the seizure of power in February 1948, the communist-dominated Action Committees of the National Front non-judicially and often violently ousted thousands of non-communists from their posts.[40] In 1952, the KSČ approved the first binding list of positions to be appointed by authorised party organs.[41] During the 1950s, this model was designed to secure party control over the most important spheres of public life. The eminent Czech historian, Karel Kaplan, has estimated that at this time there were approximately 250,000 positions appointed by central, regional and basic party organisations.[42]

This underlying concept of cadre policy persisted until 1989, although the recruitment function of the party inevitably fluctuated in line with both external and internal changes. Partisanship and class allegiance were no doubt the overriding criteria for cadre policy during the 'founding period' and the consolidation of power in the 1950s, but this rigid approach to appointments was considered deficient by the 1960s era of modernisation. Frederic Fleron in his inspiring essay on political leadership in Soviet-type systems documented a link between the mode of recruitment and the degree of plurality in communist regimes.[43] In the mid-1960s, the party not only reduced the scope of the central *nomenklatura*, but also defined new criteria for leading cadre appointments whereby the erudition and education of candidates was—together with political reliability—equally appreciated. This process culminated during the Prague Spring when Dubček asserted that the new system would bring about a 'natural selection for the appointments of leading posts',[44] though he never explained whether this 'natural selection' should be a democratic or technocratic measure. Indeed, many party organs as well as other offices listed in the *nomenklatura* bypassed the system by organising elections or competitive tendering, practices which directly contradicted Soviet norms. The Czechoslovak 'interrupted revolution' of 1968 starkly revealed the centrality of cadre policy. Taking into consideration Gehlen's list of party functions outlined above, we can hypothesise that political recruitment was the most important. The experience of the Prague Spring also documents how the disintegration of the *nomenklatura* system affected

political socialisation (propaganda and press policy), goal specification (agenda-setting) and goal attainment (implementation of policies).

Immediately after the signing of the 'Moscow Protocol' in late August 1968, the post-invasion Czechoslovak leadership was able to assuage Soviet personnel requirements by sacrificing a handful of unrepentant reformers, notably Kriegel and Císař. But the return of 'normality' to the whole system—including that of the media and economy—was preconditioned on the revival of pre-January 1968 principles of cadre policy. For this, Brezhnev demanded the restoration of the entire *nomenklatura* system, not merely the ousting of a few 'heretics'.[45] After the April 1969 Central Committee plenum, the Presidium started to prepare an administrative exchange of membership cards as the appropriate way to vet party members. The planned massive purge of 'right-wing opportunists' was, incongruously, delayed owing to a lack of paper in the printing industry, and thus began as late as January 1970.[46] All party members were obliged to present themselves at committee 'screenings' to explain, *inter alia*, their attitude to the 'fraternal assistance' proffered by the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968, a process which Vítězslav Sommer describes in detail in his case study of the town of Gottwaldov (Zlín) in this volume. The purges lasted ten months, at the end of which more than 320,000 members either were expelled or did not have their party cards returned. In sum, between 1968 and 1970 more than half a million people left the party. Naturally, loss of membership was closely tied with the loss of position in the *nomenklatura*. As Biľak categorically stated, directors of enterprises who forfeited their party card could not be permitted to retain their positions of authority.[47] Likewise, large numbers of journalists, teachers, scientists and other professionals (not all of them communists) were sacked or demoted.

This depletion of the ranks no doubt represented a serious ongoing problem for the Czechoslovak economy, but the KSČ—a huge 'HR agency'—managed to regain half a million members within a few years. In 1972, the Presidium confirmed a new definitive list of *nomenklatura* containing 7980 positions.[48] The list included all important posts in the political machine, societal institutions and industry. In sum, there were more than 500,000 jobs approved by central, regional and basic party organisations in the mid-1970s, this number increasing to 717,000 by 1987.[49] In filling the majority of these appointments, however, the approval of the highest organ was merely a formality. Regional party authorities were supposed to prepare 'cadre reserves' for particular posts. A candidate for a

vacant position listed in the *nomenklatura* was generally selected from this circle of 'cadre reserves' by a lower party or state organ. Higher bodies such as the Central Committee plenum, the Presidium or the Secretariat had the final say, but they rarely refused a proposal from below. Hence, the power of the executive was relative to the influence of lower-level institutions.

Czechoslovak Perestroika and Personnel Changes in the Presidium after 1987

The composition of the leading KSČ organs was extraordinarily stable between 1971 and 1987. Although latent internal conflict undoubtedly existed among Presidium members, the lack of a strong external impetus for radical change maintained the status quo. This situation persisted even after the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as CPSU General Secretary in March 1985. It took at least one year for the new Soviet leader to consolidate his position in the USSR. Before he could launch radical transformation in the shape of *perestroika* (reconstruction) and later *glasnost* (openness), he had to oversee a major personnel turnover at the central and regional levels to ensure support for his programme.[50] The key question for us is: how, and to what extent, did the principles of normalisation shape the KSČ leadership's response to *perestroika* (*přestavba* in Czech) in its different phases?

Initially, Gorbachev's pro-reform rhetorical turn did not arouse serious debate among the Czechoslovak executive. Husák, together with other Warsaw Pact dignitaries, met the new General Secretary in Moscow on 13 March 1985. As Gorbachev indicates in his memoirs, his portentous words about 'respect for the sovereignty and independence of each country' were not perceived by his interlocutors as a cancellation of the 'Brezhnev Doctrine'.[51] On the contrary, the Czechoslovak Presidium did not expect radical changes in either internal policies or mutual relations. It is likely that the reform-oriented theses adopted by the 17th CPSU Congress in February-March 1986 disquieted the Czechoslovak leadership, but Husák continued to pay lip service to Gorbachev.

The 17th Congress of the KSČ convened a few days after the Soviet one. It does not play any special role in the history of communism in Czechoslovakia; indeed, it is difficult to differentiate this congress from the 16th (April 1981) and even the 15th (April 1976). As usual, the

Presidium prepared all documents in advance and in February 1986 the Central Committee plenum approved them unanimously without debate.[52] One week before the congress, members of the Presidium decided that they would be 'elected' for another term. In the internal discussion, Husák remarked that 'in comrade Gorbachev's opinion the present leadership can continue'.[53] That is to say, in the eyes of the KSČ executive, the CPSU continued to command the leading role.

As long as Gorbachev's reformist policies did not overstep the limits imposed during early normalisation, conflict and factionalism inside the KSČ remained concealed. However, from late 1986 Czechoslovak leaders—the living embodiment of the condemnation of the Prague Spring—were confronted with the gradual erosion of the confines enforced after 1969. An unexpected impetus came from the USSR. In November 1986, before the launch of radical political and economic reform, Gorbachev met Comecon representatives in Moscow, where, at a closed gathering, he promoted *perestroika* as a universal model for the countries of the Soviet bloc.[54] Thereafter he sent the stenographic report of the meeting to the Central Committees of the member parties. On 19 November, Husák set this on the agenda of the Presidium. Surprisingly, the usually cautious KSČ boss was not satisfied with debates inside the inner circle. As early as 4 December 1986, he decided to inform the Central Committee about the new Soviet reformist project. Every CC member was granted access to the Moscow stenograph. Husák stated in his address: 'I find it very important for you to make yourselves familiar with the theses. But it is not permitted to copy or quote them. Confidentiality is needed, and materials must be returned. It is necessary to adapt ideas from [Gorbachev's] speech to our conditions'.[55] In this cautious way, Husák launched *perestroika* in Czechoslovakia. As an immediate consequence, the Presidium quickly approved an outline of future economic, but not yet political, reform. It represented the greatest shift in the policy process since the early 1970s.

East European states reacted to Gorbachev's innovations in different ways. The Czechoslovak approach hovered somewhere between the overtly supportive Polish and Hungarian stance and the essentially rejectionist positions of East Germany and Romania.[56] The specific Czechoslovak variant of *perestroika* was less than ambitious, largely because of the internal struggles over the scale and pace of change. Party leaders were in an unenviable bind. They were well aware of the failings of the economy and corresponding need for modifications in the structure of the economic system. But the Prague Spring had utterly convinced them that economic

reform was inextricably linked to creeping political decentralisation and social autonomy, which in turn threatened the very core of Marxism-Leninism: the leading role of the party. Since 1969, the KSČ Presidium had religiously followed Moscow's guidelines, so much so that even hard-line conservatives never publicly criticised Gorbachev (in contrast to the GDR's ideology chief Kurt Hager, among others).[57] But from 1987 onwards, this fealty was under severe strain as the Soviet Union—the bastion of 'normalised' orthodoxy—increasingly adopted a reformist course which in crucial ways closely resembled the Prague Spring. This dichotomy served to widen the hidden fissures in the Czechoslovak party at all levels. The basic fault lines at the top were between 'pragmatic' reform-oriented technocrats like Prime Minister Štrougal and staunch anti-reform hard-liners such as Bil'ak, with 'centrists' like Husák caught uncomfortably between them.

The January 1987 plenary session of the CPSU Central Committee was a turning point in the history of the Soviet bloc. In his address, Gorbachev bemoaned the 'stagnation' of the Brezhnev era, advocated a measure of inner-party democratisation and pondered radical reform proposals. The full speech, as well as a number of relevant documents, was published in translation in *Rudé právo*, demonstrating that the party's main newspaper was prepared to popularise ideas that were incongruent with the opinion of the majority of the leadership.[58] Only Štrougal had backed aspects of reform before the introduction of *perestroika* in the USSR and at the time of the CPSU plenum he intimated that the concept of Czechoslovak reform was basically identical to the Soviet version.[59] Moreover, Štrougal and Husák expressed support for the January plenum theses during negotiations with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in February 1987.[60] On 4 February, the Presidium decided to discuss proposals for reform implementation in Czechoslovakia. The nervous atmosphere of the meeting was epitomised by candidate-member Miroslav Hruškovič, who said that 'parallels are being sought between today's actions in the USSR and what was happening here in 1968'.[61] Despite the obvious dismissiveness towards change on the part of the 'conservative wing', the debate witnessed frank and surprising reflections on the present and past. For example, Indra, widely regarded as an arch-normaliser, criticised the Central Committee departments' interference in the work of the ministries, and even Bil'ak defended 'free expression of Central Committee members and candidates at plenary sessions'. Kapek likewise presented himself as a firm supporter of *perestroika*, suggesting that the Czechoslovak

mode of reform should not be restricted solely to the economic sphere. Similarly, Štrougal proposed amendments to the political and *nomenklatura* systems.[62] As a result of the Presidium's deliberations, the federal government was assigned the task of preparing a 'Law on State Enterprises', a mildly reformist act formally ratified in June 1988.

Political adjustments, however, lagged far behind economic remodelling. The taboo concept of 'reform', so reminiscent of 1968, lay at the heart of the conflict among the leadership. Even worse, internal disagreements filtered into the public arena as early as 3 March 1987, when *Rudé právo* published another of Štrougal's speeches addressed to Prague party members. In it, he alluded to the fact that 'some people'—he undoubtedly meant Biľak's faction—who in the recent past had firmly rejected national particularities, now took those particularities for granted.[63] A week later, the first major personnel shift in the leadership for many years revealed the scale of the internecine tensions. The abdication of Karel Hoffmann as boss of the trade unions and his promotion to the position of CC secretary created a split inside the Presidium: Indra, Kapek and Štrougal were opposed. General Secretary Husák was fully cognisant of the gravity of the situation. He concluded the debate with the words: 'This organ [Presidium] must be significantly rejuvenated this year'.[64] The pragmatic alliance of the 'healthy forces' and 'centrists', which had emerged after August 1968, was beginning to crumble and both factions knew that the forthcoming battle for the post of General Secretary would be connected with the scope of reform.

It was anticipated that the much-awaited visit of Gorbachev to Prague in April 1987 would sort out the thorny issue of succession. Husák himself had initiated this task during negotiations with the Soviet leader, but Gorbachev declined to support either wing in the Presidium. By adopting this non-interventionist stance, Gorbachev, as Steven Saxonberg has remarked, 'did much to hinder the reformist group from gaining power in the ČSSR'.[65] In these circumstances, the succession had to be resolved internally. Štrougal continued with the preparation of economic reform, the outline of which was debated in the Presidium in May 1987. It mirrored not only the struggle between the interests of the party apparatus and state organs, but also the factionalism inside the supreme power centre.[66] Although the authors of the reform could never admit to inspiration from the 1960s conceptualisations, the conservative wing in the Presidium opposed Štrougal's proposals for the democratisation of industry.[67] Indeed, the draft formulations of the 7th plenary session of the Central

Committee, planned for December 1987, included a provision according to which Czechoslovak *perestroika* had nothing to do with the 1968 reforms.[68] Nevertheless, Husák intended to introduce and approve not only basic economic reforms, but also a rethinking of cadre policy. In the event, this crucial session—and the concept of reform as a whole—was massively affected by an internal *coup* against the General Secretary.

Soviet-type regimes did not develop a clear mechanism for succession. Husák himself initiated his retirement, but the majority in the Presidium did not allow him to name a preferred successor. At the Presidium session on 18–19 November 1987, Indra and Biľak stunned their colleagues by putting Husák's position on the agenda. According to the minutes of the meeting, five members—Ladislav Adamec, Biľak, Hoffmann, Kempný and Jozef Lenárt—called for Husák's resignation. Colotka, Kapek and Štrougal were opposed, together with six non-voting members of the Presidium. The other three non-members took Biľak's side.[69] The Presidium then agreed on the candidacy of Jakeš, a renowned conservative, for the post of General Secretary. On 9 December Husák promised to resign, which he did at the crucial Central Committee plenum in December. His partial departure—he retained both his post as President and membership in the Presidium—had a considerable impact on the whole reform project. Undoubtedly, the abdication of the figurehead of normalisation was judged positively by most Czechoslovak citizens, but it launched an earthquake in the Presidium and Secretariat. In the twelve months following Husák's resignation all his allies stepped down: Kapek in April 1988; Štrougal and Colotka in October 1988. In addition, several reform-leaning secretaries lost their posts during the same year as a result of Jakeš's cadre policy.

Ostensibly, the new leadership supported and popularised *perestroika*. Yet, the internal struggle for its scope continued unabated. The 19th All-Union CPSU Conference in June-July 1988 was another significant external impetus. In his address, Gorbachev pondered the division of power, the state of law and the issue of human rights. As Archie Brown has argued, before 1988 Gorbachev tried to reform the existing system, whereas the decisions of this latest conference signified a divorce from basic Soviet principles.[70] The response of the Jakeš leadership to these innovations can be characterised as a 'waiting-game': the new General Secretary was stalling for the extraordinary 18th KSČ Congress scheduled for May 1990. The party continued to debate and prepare a raft of reform proposals, but many were due to be implemented after the congress; for example, changes

to the constitution and electoral system. The debilitating ambiguity of Czechoslovak *perestroika* was typified by the final cadre upheavals in the Presidium. In December 1988, Biľak was forced to resign, Adamec justifying his departure with the words: 'People see [cadre] changes as proof that we are serious about *perestroika*'.[71] In 1988–1989, the reformist image was more important than reform as such. That is not to say that top-level commitment to *perestroika* was totally lacking, but the Czechoslovak version of it arose from a bitter inner-party conflict over the very character of socialism. This battle effectively precluded major regeneration of the 'normalisation' project as the basis for a new relationship with the Soviet Union in the late Gorbachev era.

Conclusion

Throughout the forty years of communist rule, the Czechoslovak leadership struggled to gauge the latitude granted to them by the Kremlin. Husák's 'normalised' executive was no exception. Its composition originated from the defeat of the reform faction in the KSČ and the pragmatic alliance of pro-Soviet 'healthy forces' and heterogeneous 'centrists' and 'realists' after August 1968. This alliance coalesced around the slogan 'real existing socialism', as Michal Pullmann shows in his contribution to this volume, and remained unprecedentedly stable until 1987. However, as I have demonstrated throughout the chapter, behind the scenes normalisation was never based on a monolithic vision of communism, but rather on a constantly shifting balance between competing visions and ideological positions which had only one thing in common: an extreme nervousness about the idea of 'reform'. Although in the early stages of normalisation the Presidium's leeway was severely constrained by Soviet demands and pressures, the situation changed over the course of time. The self-imposed confines, expressed most cogently by the *Lessons of the Crisis Development*, restricted the KSČ from responding to urgent challenges, notably in the economy. The definitive condemnation of the reforms of the mid-1960s and the Prague Spring prohibited the implementation of a wide spectrum of political and economic measures. From 1969 onwards, reform, a word which disappeared from official vocabulary, was unimaginable because of its association with the 'counter-revolutionary' Dubček era. This ideological impasse meant that the urgent economic problems of the early 1980s were tackled by mere technical corrections and minor modifications. Liberalisations common to other satellite states, such as the legalisation of

small businesses, were impossible in Czechoslovakia until 1985 owing to the leaders' fear of the 'spectre of 1968'.

This fragile stability lasted until the advent of Gorbachev. From 1986–1987, the KSČ Presidium faced a plethora of external and internal pressures which could not be ignored or publicly repudiated. Thus, the new agenda logically provoked factionalism. The fall of Husák, the reluctant promoter of *perestroika*, and the arrival of Jakeš, an equally lukewarm adherent of change, determined the scope of reform. The Jakeš leadership, many of whose members could not stomach serious reform, was well aware that the party was confronted by an unavoidable and profound programmatic and personnel cataclysm. As a member of the Presidium, Karel Hoffmann, reportedly anticipated in December 1988: the 18th Congress 'will wipe out everything'.[72] In the event, the violent police reaction to the peaceful demonstrations of November 1989 sounded the death-knell of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

NOTES

1. See R. A. Medvedev and Z. A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* (London, 1977).
2. J. Vondrová, J. Navrátil and J. Moravec (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Pokus o reformu (říjen 1967–květen 1968)* (Praha and Brno, 1999), p. 112.
3. See National Archive of the Czech Republic (NA), f. 02/4, sv. 25, a. j. 37a, 'Usnesení sekretariátu ÚV KSČ schválená per rollam a rozhodnutí tajemníků ÚV KSČ v období od 28. února 1968 do 18. dubna 1968'.
4. Vondrová, Navrátil and Moravec (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa*, p. 336.
5. K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics 1968–1970* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 112.
6. For the text of the 'Moscow Protocol', see J. Navrátil et al. (eds), *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest, 1998), pp. 477–80.
7. J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Kapitulace (srpen-listopad 1968)* (Prague and Brno, 2001), p. 664. For detailed reconstructions of post-invasion normalisation measures and inner-party power struggles, see Williams, *The Prague Spring*, pp. 144–91; and H. G. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1976), pp. 759–823.
8. M. Macháček, *Gustáv Husák* (Prague, 2017), pp. 406–8.

9. Kriegel was the only Czechoslovak delegate to refuse to sign the 'Moscow Protocol' and, allegedly, had earlier been subject to anti-Semitic slurs by an eminent Soviet representative. For details, see Z. Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism* (London, 1980), p. 152; and M. Kun, *Prague Spring—Prague Fall: Blank Spots of 1968* (Budapest, 1999), pp. 85–6.

10. NA, f. 02/1, sv. 82, a. j. 128, b. 1, Příloha I, l. 3, 'Informace o jednání delegací ÚV KSČ a ÚV KSSS v Moskvě dne 3. a 4. října 1968'.

11. J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Mezinárodní souvislosti československé krize 1967–1970. (Září 1968—květen 1970)* (Prague and Brno, 1997), p. 232.

12. K. McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–89: A Political and Social History* (Basingstoke, 2015), p. 149.

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15. J. Maňák, *Čistky v Komunistické straně Československa v letech 1969–1970* (Prague, 1997), p. 23.

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17. NA, f. 02/4, sv. 37, a. j. 61, k informaci, 'Zpráva o studijním zájezdu do Sovětského svazu k otázkám řízení hromadných sdělovacích prostředků'.

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23. See Z. Šulc, *Stručné dějiny ekonomických reforem v Československu (České republice) 1945–1995* (Brno, 1998), p. 60.
24. See Churchill Archives Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge, MITN 2, K19, pp. 148 and 242.
25. L. Štrougal, *Paměti a úvahy* (Prague, 2009), p. 242.
26. NA, f. 02/1, sv. 144, a. j. 222, b. 0, l. 8, 'Nekorigovaný záznam diskuse předsednictva ÚV KSČ ze dne 12. listopadu 1970—k bodu 1. Návrh analýzy předchozího vývoje'.
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CHAPTER 5

An Uncommon Course: Normalisation in Slovakia

Adam Hudek

After the fall of communism in Czechoslovakia in late 1989, Slovak sociologist Róbert Roško became a member of the newly-created Slovak Republic governmental committee for the analysis of historical events during the years 1967–1970.[1] In his interpretation of the differences between Slovakia and the Czech lands, he wrote: 'The Soviet model of socialism in the 1960s was like a suit, which unbearably suffocated the Czech body. However, it more or less fitted the Slovak one, which even gained a measure of real or illusive profit from wearing it'.[2] This statement is true for

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97

many aspects of Czechoslovak development during the period of so-called 'real socialism', 1969–1989. There are still relatively few texts dealing with the peculiarities of Slovak normalisation. Their authors are predominantly Slovak historians, political scientists and sociologists, a couple of them former dissidents like Miroslav Kusý, Milan Šimečka and his son Martin. All agree that there were important differences between the Czech and Slovak cases, the roots of which lie in the specific social, cultural and economic evolution of the two parts of the country. Hence, despite common objectives, the course of normalisation in Slovakia and the Czech lands was not identical. For example, the post-Prague Spring persecutions and purges were less severe and more selective in Slovakia. Open social confrontation with the regime barely took place, and 'capitulation' in the face of normalisation was quicker and more widespread. There was significant continuity of leading functionaries in the Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS), the most prominent, Gustáv Husák, becoming a symbol of both the Prague Spring and the normalisation regime. Contrary to the Czech lands, the legitimacy, even popularity, of Slovak 'real socialism' was not dependent solely on the material well-being of the general public. Slovak communists rather successfully propagated a narrative claiming that the combination of socialism and federation was a concrete realisation of the decades-long Slovak national programme.

This chapter analyses the strategies adopted by the communist leadership in Slovakia to achieve the desired 'normalisation consensus' based on a stable community of satisfied apolitical citizens. It also deals with societal responses to these efforts. The main focus is on the modernisation process, social structures, economic development, the 'Slovak national question', the issue of the Hungarian ethnic minority and the peculiarities of Slovak dissent.

Historical Context

Initially, the reactions of both Slovaks and Czechs to the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies on 21 August 1968 were identical. Citizens almost unanimously protested against the occupation, even though the Soviets sought to play the 'Slovak national card' to disrupt Czech-Slovak unity.[3] However, a number of differences between the two parts of the Republic became visible soon after the beginning of the normalisation process. To explain them, we need to examine briefly Slovak developments in the post-war era. In 1945, Slovakia was in every aspect less developed than the

Czech lands (Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia). The population was generally poorer and less educated. The workforce distribution in Slovakia had not changed much since the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. Slovakia was predominantly an agrarian country where more than 60 per cent of the population worked in agriculture (in the Czech lands it was about 30 per cent) and roughly 20 per cent in industry (around 40 per cent in the Czech lands). The GDP per capita was approximately 60 per cent of the Czech part of the Republic. Experts at the time estimated that certain sectors of the Slovak economy were thirty or even seventy years behind the Czech.[4]

In the dominant post-war Czechoslovak economic discourse, and not only the communist variant, Slovakia needed swift industrialisation in order to achieve modernity and equality with the Czech lands. This campaign started immediately after the communist takeover in February 1948, with results that defined Slovakia for the next few decades. The emphasis on rapid industrialisation led to a 'wide gap between technical and economic features of modernization on the one hand, and cultural and social processes of modernization on the other'.[5] In the 1950s, modern industry existed in an environment largely devoid of the elements of a modern industrial society. At the beginning of the 1960s, a mere 30 per cent of the Slovak population lived in cities, and migration to urban areas did not necessarily alter people's way of thinking or behaviour.[6] In short, new city dwellers did not always become urbanised. On the contrary, they tended to ruralise the cities, outnumbering the relatively small communities of local townsmen.[7] As Jiří Musil has argued, 'The concept of Slovak industrialisation was implemented based on new enterprises and was imposed upon a network of agrarian settlements with limited resources for building houses and for the technical and social components of urban infrastructure'.[8] The emergent Slovak proletarian often worked in a factory, but remained in a village, thus retaining aspects of a typical rural life. The so-called *kovoroľník*, a mixture of proletarian and peasant, became a 'hybrid class' which outlived the communist regime.

Regardless of these contradictory developments, some progress was made. By 1970, 40.8 per cent of the Slovak population worked in industry and lived in cities, and only 23.5 per cent were employed in agriculture.[9] Industrialisation, despite its apparent shortcomings,[10] brought a measure of economic prosperity and modest well-being to a region chronically struggling with unemployment, mass emigration and vast regional differences between its western and eastern parts. The majority of Slovaks thus

perceived communist economic and social policy more positively than the already industrialised and urbanised Czechs. As a result, in the late 1960s the influx of new candidate members into the Communist Party was much faster in Slovakia than in the Czech lands, although overall membership continued to be significantly lower in Slovakia (10.4 per cent compared to 18.7 per cent).[11] Nevertheless, Slovak society remained more rural, conservative, traditional and religious with a higher acceptance of authoritarian structures.[12] In sum, it can be argued that the modernisation of Slovakia had failed to attain its primary objective: to solve the dilemma of perceived Slovak inequality vis-à-vis the Czechs.

Given these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that the 'Slovak question', or the issue of Czech-Slovak relations, emerged as a recurring problem throughout twentieth-century Czechoslovakia. For many high-ranked Slovak communist politicians and intellectuals, the troubled Czech-Slovak relationship represented a permanent theoretical and practical challenge of seminal importance and overcoming it was an essential condition for building a successful socialist Czechoslovakia. The agenda of what became known as 'Slovak national communism' was based on two axioms. First, Slovaks were an independent nation and, following Lenin's teaching, had full rights to national self-determination and independence. Second, Slovaks had willingly decided to live in a common state with the Czechs. The only possible intersection of these two arguments was a federal state, as a middle way between two unacceptable alternatives—the flawed inter-war Masarykian notion of 'Czechoslovakism' and the wartime 'clerico-fascist' Slovak separatism. However, despite initial promises after 1948 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CC KSČ) under Klement Gottwald chose a different strategy. In line with communist theory, the fundamental precondition for the political equality of Czechs and Slovaks lay not in federation, but in removing Slovakia's economic and social under-development.[13]

In the early 1950s, the KSČ leadership denounced the ideology of Slovak national communism as 'bourgeois nationalism' and viewed its propagation as a conscious effort to sabotage the goals of the communist movement and as crimes against the unity of the Republic. For a decade, until their rehabilitation in 1963, an entire generation of Slovak communist intellectuals and politicians formed in the inter-war period was silenced through repression and political trials.[14] Their leading representative, Gustáv Husák, received a twenty-five year prison sentence. Hence, in contrast to the Czech environment, the Slovak liberalisation process in the

early-to-mid 1960s acquired a pronounced nationalist undertone. Slovak communist intellectuals, especially rehabilitated 'bourgeois nationalists', regarded the centralist state imposed in the 1950s as an integral part of Stalinist deformations. For them, de-Stalinisation meant the removal of everything impeding a fair solution to the 'Slovak question'. The programme of Slovak national communism quickly became a central component of intellectual and later political discussions. It was the discontent of the KSS leadership, headed from 1963 by Alexander Dubček, with the criminalisation of their rather modest demands, which persuaded them to join Czech reformers in toppling the unpopular personal dictatorship of the KSČ First Secretary (and Czech) Antonín Novotný in January 1968. This was the move that sparked the Prague Spring.

Due to their aura of martyrdom, the national communists around Husák gained substantial social and political credit, which enabled them to move to the forefront of the Slovak reform movement. During the Prague Spring, the call for democratisation in Slovakia was inseparably linked with the demand for federalisation. As the Slovak national communists insisted, the liberalisation process could not be successful without a judicious solution to the national question, which meant the federalisation of the state.[15] Slovak critics of the 'Husák clique' focused mainly on its lack of interest in the goal of democratisation.[16] However, federalisation was perceived as a *sine qua non* in Slovakia by both radical reformers and their more conservative and nationalist opponents. The former understood it as a natural part of democratisation in the sense that nations had the same right to equality as individuals. For the latter, it was an alternative to radical reformism, which, in their eyes, threatened the existence of socialism. The Warsaw Pact's military intervention on 21 August 1968 secured victory for the conservatives and Slovak nationalists.

Although thereafter Czechoslovakia was forced to return to a Soviet-style socialist dictatorship, federalisation was formally introduced on 1 January 1969. Its existence was largely irrelevant for the future of the communist project, but it had a substantial impact on the creation of the different Czech and Slovak versions of normalisation. Even the Kremlin recognised the potential for federalisation to help 'normalise' Slovakia by driving a wedge between the united Czech-Slovak opposition to the occupation. A reading of Petr Pithart's reminiscences of 1968 shows that this tactic was successful: 'The Czech public was disappointed, even disgusted, by the Slovaks' experience at having gained satisfaction with federalization; at best, it was seen as foolishness and at worst, as blind selfishness and

even betrayal'.[17] As we shall see, this Czech sense of Slovak betrayal had a profound influence on the future of mutual relations during the normalisation period.

The Normalisation Purges

Even the most general statistical data prove that there were notable differences in the severity of the mass party screenings that took place in the course of 1970 in the two parts of the newly created federation. In the Czech lands, 23 per cent of KSČ members (about 273,000) had to leave the party, while in Slovakia it was only 17.6 per cent (around 53,000).[18] The cultural, scientific and technical intelligentsia bore the brunt of the purges. According to Milan Štefanský, 'whereas in the Czech lands 34.7% of people belonging to it (including artists and journalists) were expelled, in Slovakia the figure was 15.8%'.[19] There are several explanations for this discrepancy. First, the Slovak elites were numerically too weak for a radical purge. In the words of Martin Šimečka, 'Slovak communists obeyed the reflex of a small and young nation, which needs to protect its tiny group of elites in order not to sink to the level of a mere tribe'.[20] The dissident Miroslav Kusý compared the post-August 1968 situation in the Czech lands and Slovakia to the destruction of Czechoslovakia after March 1939: while in the Nazi-dominated Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the new ruling power was ruthless, in the wartime Slovak clerical state, the regime offered the exclusively Slovak elite a comfortable life in exchange for loyalty.[21]

The second hypothesis is based on the argument, also countenanced by the KSS leadership, that during the Prague Spring the 'counter-revolution' in Slovakia was weaker, and the principal issue was federalisation which was perceived as a 'progressive course of action'. In general, party members whose reform activities were focused predominantly on the national problem of Czech-Slovak relations had a good chance of surviving the screenings unharmed. This was in line with the Brezhnevite understanding of the relationship between nationalism and Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. According to the Brezhnev Doctrine, an emphasis on legitimate national demands did not threaten socialism. Providing it did not undermine the power monopoly of the Communist Party, policy on the 'national question' was an internal matter for each state in the Soviet bloc.[22] This relates to the third aspect of the purges. After federalisation was enacted, the Slovak national communists, having achieved their

primary objective, concentrated on maintaining the existing system and their place within it. Some of them were backed by Husák, even if they openly criticised the mass purges.[23] National communists were fully aware of the nature of the emergent regime and also what would be expected of them.[24] However, the fact that they were granted positions in culture, science and education, which in the Czech lands fell to hard-line 'ultra-dogmatists',[25] had some initial benefits for the Slovak intelligentsia. Intellectuals like Vladimír Mináč, Laco Novomeský and Ondrej Pavlík had been part of the Slovak cultural milieu for decades, and even if they were unable to hold back the purges, they most certainly did not call for their radicalisation and often tried to help persecuted friends and colleagues.

The fourth line of argumentation states that 'there is no evidence that, at least initially, the Slovak intelligentsia was more buffered from persecution than the Czech'.[26] This assertion is not in complete contradiction with the aforementioned explanations. Analysis of the Slovak intelligentsia as a homogeneous group shows that the purges were milder than in Czech lands. However, in comparison to the situation in the crucial institutions and groups connected with the liberalisation process, the differences become less visible. At universities and colleges in Bratislava, between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of party members did not pass the screenings. The same went for Slovak national newspapers, television and broadcasting. In the Slovak Academy of Sciences, the ratio was 40 per cent.[27] These data are comparable to those in Bohemia and Moravia. There is agreement on the fact that the fate of the Slovak purge victims was usually milder and that 'politically unreliable Slovaks tended to be demoted within their fields rather than thrown into menial positions, as was characteristically the case in the Czech lands'.[28] The repressions were less severe because Slovak elites did not put up significant resistance, and no relevant oppositional group was established. There were only individual protesters who were quickly isolated and silenced, the most prominent being the writer Dominik Tatarka. For Ivan Kamenec, Slovak elites, as in 1939, chose the path of the lesser evil. In an attempt to prevent a sweeping purge, they voluntarily capitulated and willingly served the 'the evil' they wanted to avoid.[29]

Contrary to the Czech lands, very few intellectuals were imprisoned in Slovakia.[30] Even the prominent 'faces of the Prague Spring' were permitted to retain their party membership and return to public life, albeit after proper public penitence.[31] In the words of Gil Eyal, '[T]he Czech intelligentsia was pushed into dissent, while the Slovak one compromised and

collaborated with the regime'.[32] By the end of 1971, the authorities'
records on 'exponents of the right' from the ranks of reformist commu-
nists and members of various oppositional associations comprised 9700
persons, of whom only 500 came from Slovakia.[33]

THE SLOVAK SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

The different development in the two parts of Czechoslovakia was possi-
ble only because of the existence of federation, which enabled indepen-
dent cultural and educational policy in both parts of the country. As Carol
Skalnik Leff notes, socialist Czechoslovakia was an 'ethnofederal state', the
same as the USSR and Yugoslavia. It was the communist parties' solution
to the ethnic diversity problem providing formal recognition for the
national aspirations of competing groups.[34] The normalisation narrative
interpreted the establishment of a federation as the only positive aspect of
the 1968 crisis. On 1 January 1969 the Slovak Socialist Republic and the
Czech Socialist Republic were established. Each of them had a parliament
(National Council) and a government. Both ceded part of their powers to
the federal government, which had exclusive control over foreign policy,
defence and the State Material Reserves. The cardinal Slovak demand and
the specific trait of the federation was 'a complex system of voting on
important issues, which introduced the "ban on majorisation", a minority
veto that protected Slovak MPs from being outvoted by their more numer-
ous Czech counterparts'.[35]

However, Moscow forbade the planned federalisation of the KSČ,
because it went against two Leninist axioms regarding party organisation:
unification without 'national federalism' and the principle of 'democratic
centralism', whereby the decrees of the Central Committee are binding
for the whole party.[36] This decision significantly weakened the relevance of
the Czechoslovak federation. Already in 1970, the normalisation regime
considerably strengthened the federal centre at the expense of the repub-
lics, which lost their competences in the economy. The independent pow-
ers of the national governments now covered mainly the cultural sphere.
Just as in other socialist dictatorships, the real power centre lay in the party
leadership. The governments, federal or national, functioned only as gear-
levers implementing the decisions of the Presidium of the Central
Committee. The autonomy of the KSS was almost completely curtailed;
all aspects of its functioning were subordinated to Prague. Nevertheless,
even the formal federation had a deep influence on Slovak developments.

As Skalnik Leff has observed: 'The rise in ministerial representation was dramatic, immediate, and persistent—far outstripping the more modest gains of earlier years. Between 1969 and 1983, Slovaks received about one-third of the ministerial assignments, an advance to truly proportional representation at the top'.[37] The same was true for the Central Committee of the KSČ and its Presidium. Contrary to the inter-war period and the 1950s, when Czech functionaries were dispatched to Slovakia, the party, state and cultural administrations were fully Slovak,[38] with proportional representation for the Hungarian and Ruthenian ethnic minorities.

The overly influential group of Slovak national communists went through a significant transformation in the 1970s. Normalisation satisfied their power aims, and maintaining the status quo became the focus of their interest. Slovak national communism ceased being the bearer of emancipation and democratisation efforts and instead became the dominant legitimising narrative of normalisation in Slovakia. This downgrading of Slovak nationalism even portended a certain revival of the 'Czechoslovak spirit' in the name of stability. As Husák put it: 'The national question has been resolved here. It is necessary, however, to strengthen Czechoslovak awareness in the people, including national minorities, and that must come from the socialist establishment'.[39] One of the 'fathers of the federation', Slovak constitutional lawyer Karol Laco, stated at the beginning of 1970: 'We should reconsider if we did not go too far with the one-sided accentuating of Czech or Slovak statehood'.[40] The 14th congress of the KSČ in May 1971 declared the problem of Czech-Slovak relations to be solved.

The official arguments for federation were pragmatic with barely any ideological superstructure: put simply, the federal state was politically and economically beneficial for both Czechs and Slovaks.[41] However, for Slovak communist intellectuals, it became a popular topic. One of their leading figures, the writer Vladimír Mináč, regarded federalisation as the realisation of the programme of the 1944 anti-fascist Slovak National Uprising. Others argued that in 1968 the 'counter-revolutionary forces' tried to deform the idea of a federation with non-Marxist and non-class chauvinist conceptions.[42] For them, the essential attributes of a truly socialist federation lay in accepting the right to self-determination including the right of secession, while simultaneously respecting the interests of the working class, democratic centralism and the leading role of the Communist Party.[43] Since autumn 1968, federalisation had lost much of its appeal to the general public.[44] The hopes for change swiftly disappeared in the face of Soviet occupation, and yet the existing problems remained.

As Ján Rychlík has pointed out: 'The situation by which the centre of the federation was also the centre of the Czech Republic proved to be very unfortunate… From the Czech point of view… the Czechoslovak and Czech state meant the same thing, while from the Slovak point of view, the federal institutions appeared to be alien and hostile'.[45]

Hence, the 'normalised' federation failed to meet the expectations of many Slovaks. The state appeared as centralised as before, all the decisions being made in Prague. The 'federal' or 'Prague' Slovaks, including Husák, were seen as renegades, who betrayed the nation for personal gain. The Czech population considered those same luminaries as evidence of Slovak over-representation in the top positions. According to Skalnik Leff: 'The feeling that Slovaks have come out of the crisis better off and are suffering less under "normalization" is widespread'.[46] In his essay from 1988, Kusý confirmed this assertion on the basis of his personal experiences in Prague.[47]

Slovak Development During the Normalisation Era

When describing his interrogation by the secret police sometime in the mid-1980s, dissident Martin Šimečka recalls a man in an elegant suit, shining shoes and well-manicured fingernails telling him: 'Look at me. I grew up in Kysuce in a wooden house with a dirt floor. We had to take water from the nearby stream. Today, I have a three-room flat with hot water running from a tap. Are you surprised that I will defend this system against you and that I can be sure that the majority of people are on my side?'.[48] The assumption about significant support for the economic and social policy of the normalisation regime in Slovakia was right. The promise of reasonable universal living standards materialised in Slovakia more clearly than in the Czech lands. Despite persisting problems, Slovakia approached the Czech part of the federation in various important indicators during the 1970s and 1980s. Industry was now the principal employer in both lands. Slovak GDP per capita was 87.81 per cent of the Czech level in 1989,[49] while gross salaries were only about 3 per cent lower in Slovakia. In 1985 the Czechoslovak government officially announced that the process of equalisation of the two republics had been successfully achieved.[50] However, general Czechoslovak stagnation in comparison to the Western democracies grew more noticeable.

As a result of economic centralisation, it was easier to subsidise Slovakia from the federal budget.[51] The adverse side-effects are described by

dissident Ján Čarnogurský: 'Money transfer from the Czech lands to Slovakia creates artificial economic conditions. The communist *nomenklatura* can, therefore, carry out projects, which would not otherwise be possible and which, in the end, only work towards reinforcing imbalances in the national economy'.[52] The prime example was the vast armament industry in Slovakia. It exported heavy weaponry to 'friendly' Third World countries, whose fiscal discipline rapidly deteriorated in the second half of the 1980s. After the fall of communism and the loss of its traditional markets, this industry became a huge burden in the transformation of the Slovak economy. The crucial Czech-Slovak issue was also adversely affected. The question 'who pays for whom' became a typical trope aggravating the already strained Czech-Slovak relationship.[53]

The success of Slovak modernisation was manifest in continuous urbanisation. The construction of flats was faster in Slovakia than in the Czech lands. The vast 'Petržalka' housing estate in Bratislava became home to 100,000 people, making it the largest residential district in Czechoslovakia. Villages also went through a period of rapid housebuilding. The gap between city and country regarding salaries and quality of life decreased considerably.[54] Slovak society grew richer. The baby boom of the 1970s (dubbed 'Husák's children') brought about a near 10 per cent population increase (compared to 5.5 per cent in the Czech lands).[55] The normalisation purges affected the number of new college students only marginally. While in Bohemia and Moravia their numbers decreased by 2500 between 1970 and 1973, in Slovakia there was an increase of 6000. In the 1980s, Slovakia had overtaken the Czech lands in the ratio of college-educated people (10 per cent as opposed to 8 per cent).[56] Slovak membership in the KSČ grew by 25 per cent in the 1970s, to an all-time high of 320,000 people. However, this growth had predominantly pragmatic reasons. Just as with the college degree, the party card became a ticket to a successful career and a comfortable life. The influx of young opportunists and pragmatists seemingly strengthened the position of the party as the universal 'gatekeeper'.

From the viewpoint of the KSČ, the main problem of Slovak socialist development was the issue of religion. Despite various forms of persecution, restraint and atheistic education, the number of Christians of all denominations decreased more slowly than expected. In 1950, official figures showed that 83 per cent of the Slovak population was Catholic and 13 per cent was Protestant. In 1989, the numbers were 64 per cent and 6

per cent respectively.[57] The communist leadership considered the Catholic Church in particular as a dangerous source of opposition, undermining its ideological hegemony. The activities of the Catholic hierarchy were closely monitored, scrutinised and curtailed. However, the normalisation regime in Slovakia was never able to disrupt the underground church and associated 'lay movements', which became exceedingly popular among Slovak youth in the 1980s.

Contrary to the nationally homogeneous Czech lands, Slovakia had ethnic minorities. The most numerous, the Hungarian, numbered 554,000 people, more than 12 per cent of the total population. Others included Ruthenes and Roma. Although the Czechoslovak constitution guaranteed all ethnic minorities equality, as well as cultural and language rights, the reality was somewhat different. The Hungarian minority had to face suspicions about their irredentism and a negative image portrayed in Slovak history books. In the immediate postwar era, the KSČ became the leading nationalist force supporting the expulsion of ethnic Germans and Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. The Slovak national communists around Husák were the most radical proponents of the forced Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange in the late 1940s.[58] In the 1950s and 1960s, relations between Slovak and Hungarian communists were far from cordial. Representatives of the Hungarian minority in the KSS, even in its top ranks, were often considered by their Slovak peers as lobbyists on behalf of their minority, which was true, or even proxies of the Hungarian government, which was exaggerated.[59] During the Prague Spring, Slovak nationalism, in stark contrast to the democratising essence of the reform movement, focused on curtailing the cultural and linguistic rights of the Hungarian minority. On the other hand, the organisation representing Hungarians in Slovakia became more active in its demands.

In the 1970s, the regime attempted to silence existing conflicts by integrating the minorities into Slovak society. Egid Pepich, Minister of Interior in the Slovak government, argued that the false revival of the isolationism of the minorities contradicted Brezhnev's thesis about the convergence of nations.[60] The poor understanding of the Slovak language by many members of the Hungarian minority was considered a key problem and was used to explain the low educational level of Slovak Hungarians.[61] As a result, the Slovak government restricted the usage of the Hungarian language in public spaces and administration. Attempts to increase the share of Slovak language in Hungarian schools caused strong disapproval and led directly to the emergence of dissent among the Hungarian minority.

Another source of discontent was the travel restrictions to Hungary intro-duced in the 1980s. It was mostly the Hungarians in Slovakia who were affected by the attempt to isolate Czechoslovak citizens from the 'exces-sively liberal' regime of János Kádár.[62]

An isolationist, pro-Russian, anti-western, plebeian and conservative Slovak nationalism became typical of Slovak normalisation. In this narra-tive, the Slovak path to socialism was intertwined with the battle for national emancipation against stronger neighbours—Hungarians, Germans and Czechs. Although Slovak national communists like Mináč were a pillar of the normalisation system, their actual (self-) legitimisation consisted of a continuous reproduction of this national narrative.[63] By pre-venting the Slovak question from becoming an exclusive subject of anti-communist dissent, especially of its Catholic segment, they significantly secured the legitimacy of the normalisation regime in Slovakia. There was no comparable narrative fostering legitimisation of normalisation on national grounds in the Czech lands.

Dissent

The combination of positive economic and social development and a suc-cessful national communist narrative meant that Slovak society had much weaker motivation for radical systemic change than the Czech. The differ-ent situations in the two parts of the federation influenced the evolution of the dissident movement. Both secret police reports and dissidents themselves agree that the opposition in Slovakia was much weaker and less organised than in the Czech lands.[64] In 1985, Kusý wrote that the achieve-ment of their national aspirations had satisfied the Slovaks, so that they did not, as yet, care much about the issues of human rights and freedom.[65] Besides the smaller numbers, dissent in Slovakia was also 'less political', and even the groups which could be labelled as oppositional did not declare their objectives in terms of politics. They were more non-conformist communities than fully-fledged dissident associations. One such cluster, consisting of Slovak sociologists, introduced the term 'islands of positive deviations' to describe this situation.[66] This was true for two of the most visible cases—the underground church and the ecological move-ment. The weak opposition resulted in a more benevolent regime and milder censorship. Especially during the *perestroika* era, discussions in Slovak 'intellectual' journals were more open than in the Czech lands. However, according to Martin Šimečka, because of this, Slovak dissidents'

plans, contrary to their Czech counterparts, dealt with reforming the existing regime instead of establishing a liberal democracy.[67]

This less hostile stance towards the socialist dictatorship had many other causes, some of which have been discussed above. However, Šimečka's insider statement confirms the lack of radicalism in Slovakia and the different nuances of the Czech and Slovak opposition. It was, to a great extent, a consequence of the regime's highly successful strategy to prevent contacts between Czech and Slovak dissidents.[68] An important result was the negligible Slovak participation in Charter 77, the main dissident initiative established in Prague in January 1977. '[T]he original list of Slovak Charter signatories was an exclusive club of those who were resident in Prague or passing through at the relevant time. Subsequent attempts to bolster Slovak adherence to Charter principles were largely unavailing, even among the politically ostracized'.[69] On the other hand, very few representatives of the Czech dissident movement were interested in the situation in Slovakia.[70] One of the explanations why Charter 77 did so poorly among Slovaks is that it did not reflect either the situation in Slovakia or specific Slovak issues.[71]

Although Slovak opposition groups lacked a similar platform, Charter 77 was, as Ján Čarnogurský argues, of critical importance for the Slovaks. It was able to nullify communist propaganda aimed at Western audiences. This was crucial for the representatives of the Slovak underground church, routinely described as 'clerico-fascists' by the normalisation regime. Charter 77 was instrumental in reassuring the West that Slovak Catholic dissent was a part of the democratic opposition.[72] Despite the politics of repression, isolation and elimination of its influence, the Catholic Church, especially its underground structures, represented the dominant force of Slovak 'parallel culture'. Catholic dissidents may have presented themselves as non-political,[73] but the communist authorities perceived them as the main oppositional force in Slovakia. Indeed, after Karol Wojtyła's inauguration as Pope John Paul II in 1978 the Slovak underground church became more active and politicised. This was especially true for the lay movement whose leading representatives, Vladimír Jukl, Silvester Krčméry, Ján Langoš, Jozef Mikloško and Ján Čarnogurský, focused largely on religious rights, but also on other civic freedoms such as freedom of speech and assembly.[74] As a result, the Slovak government always pursued a stricter atheist policy than its Czech counterpart.[75]

In the 1980s, attendance at pilgrimages demonstrated the strength of the Catholic movement. On 7 July 1985, about 150,000 people

celebrated the 'Slavic saints' Cyril and Methodius at the Moravian Velehrad. More than half were from Slovakia. The official celebration turned into a protest as the attendees hissed down the communist speakers and demanded religious freedom. What leading party representatives considered most troubling was the high involvement of youth.[76] Activities in the lay movements and attendance at pilgrimages were a relatively safe form of protest. Peaceful mass gatherings gave participants a sense of solidarity and safety as they knew that it was hardly possible for the regime to prosecute all of them.[77] However, the attempt at direct political action in the form of a 5000 strong 'candle demonstration' for religious rights in the centre of Bratislava on 25 March 1988 was brutally dispersed by the police. The Slovak underground church then abandoned direct confrontation with the regime but continued its activities. In the same year, 291,284 Slovaks (out of a total of 501,590 signatories) signed a petition demanding religious rights in Czechoslovakia.[78]

The policies towards the Hungarian minority gave rise to Hungarian dissent in Slovakia. In 1978, a geologist Miklós Duray, founded the 'Committee for the Legal Protection of the Hungarian Minority' to challenge discrimination against Hungarian speakers. A year later, he signed Charter 77. Even so, the Chartists remained reserved about Duray's opinions and demands on Hungarian-Slovak relations. As Michal Kopeček writes: 'The Chartists, especially the Slovak ones,[79] who generally supported Duray, deplored the one-sided stress on infringements of Hungarian nationality rights without a broader picture of general human rights abuses in Czechoslovakia and, as a matter of fact, also in Hungary'.[80] Duray was repeatedly imprisoned on various charges during the 1980s and in the second half of the decade the younger generation did not limit its activities only to minority issues and started to build contacts with other oppositional groups.[81]

The Slovak ecology movement also became an example of a semi-official, non-conformist initiative that turned towards dissent, albeit somewhat unintentionally. In 1980, environmental topics came to the fore; many socialist dictatorships had to acknowledge their importance. In Czechoslovakia various grass-root movements emerged, many of which cooperated with the official environmental organisations.[82] In October 1987, the Bratislava branch of the Slovak Union of Nature and Country Conservation issued the publication *Bratislava/nahlas* ('Bratislava/aloud').[83] It criticised the authorities' ignorance of environmental problems in Bratislava and offered solutions for the most crucial issues. Most of

its authors were scientists who merely wanted to start a discussion about the topic. However, one of the editors, Ján Budaj, was a well-known non-conformist with a dissident background. Officially, there were 3000 copies of *Bratislava/nahlas*, but it is estimated that 60,000 more were created via *samizdat* (illegal self-publishing). Regime functionaries started to perceive the project as a political problem only after it was mentioned in a *Voice of America* broadcast and in the *New York Times*. Sharp criticism in the party press and from representatives, including Husák, followed.[84] For the ecologist Mikuláš Huba: 'After that, there was no other possibility than to start to behave "politically". The two years from October 1987 to November 1989 became a university of "dissentship" or oppositional politics for many authors of *Bratislava/nahlas*. Possibly because of this, Václav Havel called it the Slovak version of Charter 77'.[85]

From 1987, the first hints that the Slovak opposition was joining forces became visible. Members of the civic dissident movement and the underground church signed a joint 'Declaration Regarding the Deportation of Jews from Slovakia during World War II'. This statement was necessary for Catholic dissidents to distance themselves from allegations of sympathy towards the authoritarian regime of the wartime Slovak state, 1939–1945.[86] In 1988, a small group of Slovak 'sixty-eighters' became more active. Their renowned leader, Alexander Dubček, gave interviews for Hungarian and Italian newspapers in which he spoke of the need to reform the communist regime.[87] Young communist scholars, utilising the '*perestroika* thaw', did the same in Slovak journals like *Nové slovo* ('New Word'). The preparation of the new Czechoslovak constitution agitated the younger generation of Slovak national communists, who criticised the process as impinging on 'Slovak sovereignty'.[88] The approval of the constitution by the Slovak National Council engendered a situation unprecedented since 1968—some deputies wanted to vote against the proposal and had to be brought to heel by the party leadership. However, communist reformers, both young and old, never established working contacts with the dissident movement or the non-conformist bloc.

The somewhat isolated Slovak 'islands of positive deviation' finally became connected as a result of the last political trial in communist Czechoslovakia. On 17 August 1989, five Slovak dissidents were arrested and charged with subversion and incitement.[89] The trial of the so-called 'Bratislava Five' ignited an unexpected wave of protests, and not only from traditional oppositional circles. A significant example is the letter of Slovak sociologists addressed to President Husák, which became a broad appeal.[90]

Together with the mass signing of the Charter 77-inspired petition *Několik vět* ('A Few Sentences'), it was proof of the growing wave of discontent in Slovakia. On 16 November 1989, a protest march of about 200 university students in Bratislava demanded reform of the school system. The police monitored the event but did not intervene. The KSS leadership considered the demonstration a marginal incident with no future negative consequences.[91] As subsequent events showed, it was not an entirely accurate assessment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the underlying assumption is that the normalisation regime had the same objectives in both the Czech lands and Slovakia, only the tactics on how to reach them differed. In this sense, the post-1968 communist leadership skilfully utilised the differences between the Slovak and Czech situation to its advantage. According to Juraj Marušiak, the seemingly milder course of the 'consolidation process' in Slovakia achieved the capitulation and integration of much broader segments of the population.[92] On the other hand, the communist regime's modernisation policies had already helped to build a reservoir of loyalty since the 1950s. In Slovakia, the communist system was better able than in the Czech lands to fulfil its pledge to improve material well-being and the consequences of economic stagnation appeared later and were less visible.

As Martin Šimečka notes, Slovak normalisation as a quid pro quo of Czechoslovak federalisation absorbed the majority of Slovak elites and blunted their ambitions to ponder alternatives.[93] The Slovak national communists created a viable narrative, which successfully promoted the existing system as the fulfilment of the century-long efforts of the Slovak nation. Despite its shortcomings, the federal system and the existence of the Slovak government produced political, administrative and managerial elites in much higher numbers than before, a development which greatly facilitated Slovak independence in 1993. Contrary to the Czech case, the Slovak opposition was weaker, less politicised and lacked a common platform. It could tackle specific issues like religious freedom or the environment but did not provide a political alternative to the existing regime. The crucial factor was the successful compartmentalisation of the Czech and Slovak dissident movements, making productive cooperation difficult if not impossible. Paradoxically, with policy focused on the economic equality and self-sufficiency of the two republics, the normalisation regime

unintentionally achieved the same outcome among both Czechs and Slovaks. The two parts of the country became more isolated and their interaction continuously declined, which caused alienation at the level of elites and the general public.[94] The results of the different approaches towards Czech and Slovak society during normalisation significantly influenced post-1989 developments in Slovakia as well as the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two independent states by 1992–1993.[95] In the last days of the Czechoslovak normalisation regime, on 5 November 1989, the non-conformist sociologists Martin Bútora and Zora Bútorová asked their Czech friends: 'My dears, will you still like us even when nationalist passions burst forth, as they sadly will …?'.[96]

Notes

1. The committee existed from 1990–1992, when the Slovak republic was still part of the Czechoslovak federation.
2. R. Roško cited in J. Marušiak, 'Slovenská spoločnosť a normalizácia', in J. Madarásová (ed.), *Česká a slovenská spoločnosť v období normalizácie* (Bratislava, 2003), pp. 109–54 (here p. 145).
3. E. Steiner, *The Slovak Dilemma* (Cambridge, 1973), p. 201.
4. V. Průcha, 'Economic Development and Relations, 1918–1989', in J. Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia* (Budapest, 1995), pp. 40–76 (here p. 42).
5. J. Musil, 'Czech and Slovak Society', in Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia*, pp. 77–94 (here p. 90).
6. Marušiak, 'Slovenská spoločnosť a normalizácia', p. 128.
7. A. Slepička, *Venkov a/nebo město lidé/sídla/krajina* (Prague, 1981), pp. 32–3.
8. Musil, 'Czech and Slovak Society', p. 81.
9. By contrast, in the Czech lands the figures were 48.6 per cent and 14.6 per cent. See Průcha, 'Economic Development and Relations, 1918–1989', p. 74.
10. On the over-prioritisation of heavy industry, imbalances, poor productivity and the disastrous impact on environment and health, see ibid., pp. 67–70.
11. National Archive of the Czech Republic, Archiv Ústředního výboru KSČ, f. 02/2, sv. 302, a. j. 386. In the democratic elections of May 1946, the Communist Party polled 43.25 per cent in the Czech lands, but only 30.48 per cent in Slovakia.
12. M. Kučera and Z. Pavlík, 'Czech and Slovak Demography', in Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia*, p. 39.

13. V. Široký, 'Pomer Čechov a Slovákov v novej Československej republike: Prednáška v Slovanskom dome v Prahe', 8 October 1945, in V. Široký, *Za šťastné Slovensko v socialistickom Československu* (Bratislava, 1952), pp. 96–108 (here pp. 101 and 108).

14. See J. Benko and A. Hudek, 'Ideológia čechoslovakizmu a slovenskí komunisti', in A. Hudek, J. Mervart and M. Kopeček (eds), *Čecho/slovakismus* (Prague, 2019), pp. 281–309.

15. See S. Brown, 'Socialism with a Slovak Face: Federalization, Democratization, and the Prague Spring', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 22, no. 3 (2008), pp. 467–95.

16. J. Strinka, 'Federalizácia a demokratizácia', *Kultúrny život*, vol. 23, no. 14 (1968), pp. 1 and 6; P. Števček, '108 dní do federácie', *Kultúrny život*, vol. 23, no. 28 (1968), p. 3.

17. P. Pithart. 'Towards a Shared Freedom, 1968–1989', in Musil (ed.), *The End of Czechoslovakia*, pp. 201–23 (here p. 204).

18. The numbers vary between 52,950 and 53,300. See, for example, S. Sikora, 'Politický vývoj na Slovensku 1968–1971', in M. Londák, S. Sikora and E. Londáková (eds), *Od predjaria k normalizácií: Slovensko v Československu na rozhraní 60. a 70. rokov 20. storočia* (Bratislava, 2016), pp. 11–130 (here p. 120).

19. M. Štefanský, 'The Fall of Communism and the Establishment of an Independent Slovakia', in M. Teich, D. Kováč and M. D. Brown (eds), *Slovakia in History* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 351–69 (here p. 355).

20. M. M. Šimečka, *Medzi Slovákmi* (Bratislava, 2017), p. 11.

21. M. Kusý, 'Slovenský fenomén' (1985), reproduced in M. Kusý, *Eseje* (Bratislava, 1991), pp. 155–74 (here p. 169).

22. P. Zwick, *National Communism* (Boulder, CO, 1983), pp. 113–14.

23. This was the case for two *enfants terribles* communist intellectuals, Ondrej Pavlík and Vladimír Mináč. See Sikora, 'Politický vývoj na Slovensku 1968–1971', p. 118; and M. Štefanský, *Slovensko v rokoch 1967–1970: Výber dokumentov* (Bratislava, 1992), p. 601.

24. J. Marušiak, 'Nezávislé iniciatívy na Slovensku v rokoch normalizácie', in J. Pešek and S. Szomolányi (eds), *November 1989 na Slovensku: Súvislosti, predpoklady a dôsledky* (Bratislava, 1999), pp. 54–75 (here p. 59).

25. In Slovakia, the main representative of the 'ultra' group was the new ideological secretary of the Central Committee of the KSS, Ľudovít Pezlár.

26. G. Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites: From Prague Spring to the Breakup of Czechoslovakia* (Minneapolis, MN, 2003), p. 49.

27. Sikora, 'Politický vývoj na Slovensku 1968–1970', pp. 121–2.

28. C. S. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia: The Making and Remaking of a State, 1918–1987* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), p. 261.

29. I. Kamenec, 'O hľadaní dobra a zla v dejinách', in I. Kamenec, *Spoločnosť, politika, historiografia*. (Bratislava, 2009), pp. 88–9.

30. As Martin Šimečka has noted, it was no coincidence that most of them were of 'non-Slovak origin'—Jews (Ladislav Kalina), Czechs (Milan Šimečka) and Hungarians (Miklós Duray). The Slovak communists expected that the persecution of the 'other' would not upset the majority. Šimečka, *Medzi Slovákmi*, p. 20.

31. This was the case of the journalist Pavol Števček, one of the prominent voices of the Slovak liberalisation process, who in 1973 undertook self-criticism for his activities. See N. Kmeť, 'Intelektuáli na Slovensku v rokoch 1948–1989 a premena ich vzťahu ku KSČ', in J. Pažout (ed.), *Komunističtí intelektuálové a proměna jejich vztahu ke KSČ (1945–1989)* (Prague, 2013), pp. 54–75 (here p. 63).

32. Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*, p. xx.

33. Štefanský, 'The Fall of Communism', p. 355.

34. C. S. Leff, *The Czech and Slovak Republics: Nation versus State* (Boulder, CO, 1997), p. 128.

35. A. Gjuričová, 'Too Ideal to be a Parliament: The Representative Assemblies in Socialist Czechoslovakia, 1948–1989', in R. Aerts et al. (eds), *The Ideal of Parliament in Europe since 1800* (London, 2019), pp. 199–218 (here p. 208).

36. J. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století: Spolupráce a konflikty 1914–1992* (Prague, 2012), pp. 509–14.

37. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, p. 253.

38. Jan Rychlík has observed that in this respect the Czechoslovak federation was different from its Soviet equivalent in that ethnic Russians continued to occupy elite positions in all Soviet republics. J. Rychlík, 'Normalizační podoba československé federace', in N. Kmeť and J. Marušiak (eds), *Slovensko a režim normalizácie* (Prešov, 2003), pp. 8–46 (here p. 31).

39. G. Husák, 'Z prejavu na zjazde KSS, 14. 5. 1971', in V. Kún (ed.), *V bratskej jednote. Zborník statí a prejavov k otázke vzťahu Čechov a Slovákov* (Bratislava, 1979), p. 195.

40. Cited in Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, p. 542.

41. Rychlík, 'Normalizační podoba československé federace', p. 18.

42. J. Chovanec, *Československá socialistická federácia* (Bratislava, 1978), p. 53.

43. Ibid., p. 66.

44. J. Žatkuliak, 'Deformácie ústavného zákona o československej federácií po októbri 1968', *Historický časopis*, no. 4 (1992), pp. 473–85 (here p. 477).

45. Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, p. 531.

46. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, p. 271.

47. M. Kusý, 'Češi a Slováci', in M. Kusý, *Na vlnách slobodnej Európy* (Bratislava,1990), p. 41.

48. Šimečka, *Medzi Slovákmi*, p. 24. Kysuce is a poor region in north-western Slovakia.

49. According to data from *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR* (Prague, 1985) p. 655.

50. Průcha, 'Economic Development and Relations, 1918–1989', p. 73.

51. Rychlík, 'Normalizační podoba československé federace', p. 38.

52. J. Čarnogurský, 'O Slovensku a Slovácích', *Alternativa*, no. 1 (1989), p. 43.

53. In the sense that many Czechs believed they were essentially financing Slovak modernisation, while many Slovaks feared that the profits of Slovak factories were being siphoned off to their headquarters in the Czech lands.

54. J. Buzalka, *Slovenská ideológia a kríza* (Bratislava, 2012), p. 66.

55. L. Kalinová, *K sociálním dějinám Československa v letech 1969–1989* (Prague, 1999), p. 60.

56. Ibid., p. 73.

57. J. Pešek and M. Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie: Cirkvi na Slovensku 1969–1989* (Bratislava, 2004), pp. 8–9.

58. The accusation by Hungarian communist leaders of nationalist tendencies among Slovak communists was later used in the political trials of the Slovak 'bourgeois nationalists'. See M. Barnovský, 'Sovietsky zväz, komunisti a riešenie maďarskej otázky', in Z. Kárník and M. Kopeček (eds), *Bolševismus, komunismus a radikální socialismus v Československu*, vol. III (Prague, 2004), pp. 153–82.

59. Barnovský, 'Sovietsky zväz, komunisti a riešenie maďarskej otázky', p. 179.

60. J. Marušiak, 'Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike v rokoch normalizácie', in Kmeť and Marušiak (eds), *Slovensko a režim normalizácie*, pp. 222–79 (here p. 233).

61. Manual workers constituted 46 per cent of Slovak Hungarians; only a paltry 1.6 per cent held college degrees. See ibid., p. 258.

62. The primary cause for these restrictions was economic: to prevent shopping trips to Hungary, where items in short supply and 'Western' merchandise were more accessible. See ibid., p. 247.

63. National communists never openly threatened the ruling authorities. For example, the decision of the Slovak National Council in 1975 that the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising (August 1944) would no longer be a national holiday went without protest.

64. J. Žatkuliak (ed.), *1989. November a Slovensko: Chronológia a dokumenty* (Bratislava, 1999), pp. 17–61.

65. Kusý, 'Slovenský fenomén', p. 170.

66. See M. Bútora, 'Pozitívni devianti alebo odklínanie stigmatizovaných', *Slovenské pohľady*, no. 12 (1989), pp. 112–18; and D. Doellinger, *Turning Prayers into Protests: Religious-Based Activism and Its Challenge to State*

Power in Socialist Slovakia and East Germany (Budapest and New York, 2013), pp. 186–7.

67. Šimečka, *Medzi Slovákmi*, p. 38.

68. Even contacts between the opposition in the two biggest Slovak cities, Bratislava and Košice, were effectively curtailed.

69. Leff, *National Conflict in Czechoslovakia*, p. 266. In 1989, less than 50 of the 1883 Charter 77 signatories were Slovaks. The majority of signatories lived in Prague.

70. This benevolent ignorance was typical of the vast majority of Czech intellectuals since the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Despite occasional criticism from both Czechs and Slovaks, the situation did not change until the dissolution of the state in 1993.

71. See M. Kusý, 'Charta 77 a ľudské práva', 13 October 2007, at https://www.olp.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/charta_77_prof_kusy.pdf (last accessed 4 August 2021).

72. J. Čarnogurský, 'Mýty o protikomunistickom odboji', *Impulz*, no. 3 (2009), at http://www.impulzrevue.sk/article.php?466 (last accessed 4 August 2021).

73. Its representatives, František Mikloško and Ján Chryzostom Korec, did not sign Charter 77 explaining that they did not have a mandate to enter the civic-political platform. See V. Prečan, 'Charta 77 na Slovensku aneb Slovensko a Charta 77' (1994–2019), at http://www.csds.cz/cs/g6/3361-DS.html#dsy3361-DS_A1a (last accessed 4 August 2021).

74. E. Londáková, 'Nežná revolúcia pred rokom 1989', in P. Petruf et al., *Slovensko a Československo v XX. storočí* (Bratislava, 2010), pp. 305–15 (here p. 308).

75. Pešek and Barnovský, *V zovretí normalizácie*, p. 56.

76. Over 60 per cent of the participants at Velehrad were from the younger generation. See ibid., p. 146.

77. Ibid., p. 148.

78. For the so-called Petition of Moravian Catholics, see J. Šimulčik, *Čas svitania. Sviečková manifestácia - 25. marec 1988.* (Prešov, 1998), p. 26

79. Čarnogurský considered Duray a Hungarian nationalist, not a dissident. See Marušiak, 'Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike', p. 257.

80. M. Kopeček, 'The Socialist Conception of Human Rights and Its Dissident Critique: Hungary and Czechoslovakia, 1960s–1980s', *East Central Europe*, vol. 46, nos 2–3 (2019), pp. 261–89 (here p. 283).

81. Marušiak, 'Maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike', p. 275.

82. For details, see M. Spurný, 'Mezi vědou a politikou. Ekologie za socialismu a kapitalismu (1975–1995)', in M. Kopeček (ed.), *Architekti dlouhé změny: Expertní kořeny postsocialismu v Československu* (Prague, 2019), pp. 267–89.

83. Bratislava/nahlas, at https://monoskop.org/images/1/1d/Budaj_Jan_ed_Bratislava_nahlas.pdf (last accessed 4 August 2021).

84. However, the communist intellectual and member of the CC KSS, Vladimír Mináč, openly disagreed with the persecution of environmentalists around Bratislava/nahlas.

85. M. Huba, 'Bratislava/nahlas po dvadsiatich rokoch', *Pamäť národa*, no. 4 (2007), pp. 104–6.

86. However, members of the Slovak Catholic opposition also published *samizdat* articles sympathetic to representatives of the *ľudak* regime. See, for example, the journal *Historický zápisník* (Historical Notebook) from 1986 devoted to the memory of Jozef Tiso, at http://www.samizdat.sk/priloha/historicky-zapisnik-1986-1.pdf (last accessed 4 August 2021).

87. In Italian and French leftist and communist circles, Dubček was an important symbol of democratic socialism.

88. J. Žatkuliak, 'Udalosti, ktoré viedli slovenskú spoločnosť k novembru 1989', in Petruf et al. (eds), *Slovensko a Československo v XX. storočí*, pp. 329–44 (here p. 336).

89. See J. Marušiak, 'Bratislavská päťka. Prejav agónie komunistického režimu', in V. Bystrický et al., *Storočie procesov: Súdy, politika a spoločnosť v moderných dejinách Slovenska* (Bratislava, 2013), pp. 241–58. The 'five' were Ján Čarnogurský, Miroslav Kusý, Hana Šolcová-Ponická, Anton Selecký and Vladimír Maňák.

90. M. Bútora, 'Sociológovia prezidentovi Husákovi: buď, alebo', *Denník N*, 6 August 2018, at https://dennikn.sk/1547095/sociologovia-prezidentovi-husakovi-bud-alebo/ (last accessed 4 August 2021).

91. Londáková, 'Nežná revolúcia pred rokom 1989', p. 314.

92. Marušiak, 'Slovenská spoločnosť a normalizácia', p. 143.

93. Šimečka, *Medzi Slovákmi*, p. 30.

94. Musil, 'Czech and Slovak Society', p. 88.

95. See Eyal, *The Origins of Postcommunist Elites*.

96. M. Bútora, Z. Bútorová and A. Miltová, *Ale snad i pro toto jsme žili, ne? Výber z korešpondencie Milana Petruska a Aleny Miltovej s Martinom Bútorom a Zorou Bútorovou, 1985–1989* (Prague, 2016), p. 386.

The Czechoslovak Security Service During Normalisation: The Appearance of Success

Kieran Williams

Aware of their compromised position after the Soviet-led invasion of August 1968, Czechoslovakia's new leaders had to be at least somewhat attuned to popular opinion during normalisation.[1] In order to assuage and appease a citizenry that would have wanted the reforms of 1968 to continue, elites needed multiple streams of information as well as the means to nudge the public mood toward grudging acceptance and, wherever possible, active support. The Communist Party and satellite organisations of the National Front would obviously do their part, once they had been purged. Another tool was the Gallup-style polling of representative population samples that was regularly conducted after 1972 by the state statistical office, the findings of which were classified and available only to a small circle.[2] The capstone, however, was the coercive surveillance of the secret police, generally known as State Security (in Czech, *Státní bezpečnost* or StB, in Slovak *Štátna bezpečnosť* or ŠtB).[3]

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But before it could contribute to the normalisation of society, the StB itself had to be normalised. Like every other part of the state, it had been caught up in the 'pre-spring', the five years before 1968 in which the shortcomings of the Stalinist model had been critiqued from within and the ground laid for a new model that would better fit the country's needs, values and preferences. Some of the most radical ideas floated during 1968 came from officials in the Ministry of the Interior, who proposed dismantling much of the StB and converting what remained into a dedicated counter-espionage outfit no longer monitoring and punishing people for their views. These plans went beyond what centrist reformers around Alexander Dubček were comfortable with, and StB officers themselves split into three camps: radical reformers, Dubček clients and anti-reformers. During the week after 20 August 1968, the StB was torn apart, with one faction collaborating with the invading forces, another trying to thwart them and still another adopting a 'wait and see' stance.[4]

As in most sectors, the initial hard work of normalisation at the StB was largely performed by pragmatic 'realists', figures who had risen with Dubček in 1968 and favoured change within strict limits. In the months after August, they replaced the bolder reformers around Interior Minister Josef Pavel and countermanded his orders for a far-reaching reorganisation, while also containing the most ardent Stalinists.[5] The immediate imperative for Dubček and his successor from April 1969, Gustáv Husák, was to ensure that the StB did not escape the Communist Party's grip and become a rogue actor.[6] As early as 27 September and 17 October 1968, gatherings were held in StB offices at which collaborators with the invasion demanded a fierce crackdown, which so alarmed the Party Presidium that they directed ministers on 1 November 1968 to take 'preventive measures'

> so that in no event can individuals or groupings attempt to misuse the means and instruments of the security services for intervention within the party, in internal party problems, which would necessarily lead to recurrences of the 1950s. All security forces must be fully focused on the struggle against hostile intelligence agencies and their accomplices.[7]

As that last sentence conveyed, the politicians did want the StB restored to full functionality, cooperating with counterpart agencies in neighbouring socialist countries, and undertaking its own kind of public relations (something the StB had started to do before and during 1968).[8] Beyond that lay

a third, still deeper need, to pursue the greater efficiency and modernisation that the reforms had envisioned, but without the 'utopian rationalism' of 1968.[9]

This chapter will present the superficial success of the StB's normalisation, in terms both of its internal rebuilding through purges and reorganisation, and of its return to service as monitor and mover of public sentiment. A case study from Slovakia will detail how by 1972 the ŠtB was in a position, after the dual upheaval of purges and federalisation, to carry out an operation that could secure a court conviction for 'sedition'. Moving forward in time, I will show that by the mid-1970s the StB appeared to have overcome the profound disruption to its work abroad and at the local level. I will conclude with a brief overview of the StB's belated re-embrace of reform in response to Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

Purging and Rebuilding

The purge of the StB, and of the Ministry of the Interior in which it was housed along with the regular police (Public Security, *Veřejná bezpečnost*, VB), had several facets and was not limited to removal of the most ardent proponents of change. It was also an opportunity to populate the command structure with officials closely tied to the Communist Party's leadership, topped by Husák's chief of staff, Radko Kaska, as the federal interior minister from 1970. Their mission was to ensure that hard-liners in the StB did not undermine Husák's assurances to the public that there would be no return to the terror and trials of the 1950s, of which Husák himself had been a victim. It was also a chance to pension off any remaining officers who had taken part in those crimes.

Since most StB officers were also members of the party, the purge in 1969–1970 was a dual process with each officer's party membership decided first, followed by a service review. There were three possible fates for party membership: renewal, cancellation or expulsion. Expulsion usually resulted in loss of employment, while cancellation might result in dismissal, demotion or reassignment. Of all the party members employed in the federal, Czech and Slovak interior ministries, 3662 (10.5 per cent) had lost their memberships by the end of 1970, a rate about half the average for the party as a whole. An inquiry two years later found that one-third (1358) of them were still working in some capacity in one of the three interior ministries, including 237 who had suffered expulsion from the party. They were kept on either in lower positions in the VB, or because

they had skills in high-demand areas such as languages and technology used by the StB's Sixth Directorate (electronic eavesdropping). Most of these survivors (1045) were sacked during another wave in 1974, once new recruits could assume their functions. Having numbered around 10,000 employees in spring 1968, by the start of the 1980s the StB had recovered its losses and grown to more than 12,000.[10] Even more important than the numbers purged was the cumulative turnover at the command level: between 1968 and 1971, 73 per cent of top StB officers were replaced. Normalisation of the StB, as of the party and state in general, created a new elite, different from the ones in power before and during 1968.[11]

Concurrent to the purge was the extensive reorganisation required by the conversion of Czechoslovakia from a unitary into a federal state on 1 January 1969. Security was not an exclusively federal matter, so separate Czech and Slovak interior ministries were created, and with them Main Directorates (coordinating and analytical staffs) for the StB in the respective republics. This change disrupted what had historically been a unified military-style hierarchy, and left the federal centre feeling that it lacked the full picture of what was happening in the country and what local StB units were up to. On the advice of a federalisation review commission, the Party's Presidium ordered in June 1970 that the StB be recentralised. While prompted by poor performance and staff shortages, the move also allowed the federal government to abolish the Czech Main Directorate, which had become a bastion of petulant hard-liners. In response to Slovak protestations at the loss of autonomy, the Slovak ŠtB command was granted asymmetric recognition as the Twelfth Directorate.[12] As the simplified organisational chart in Fig. 6.1 shows, responsibility for the StB was concentrated in the federal interior ministry but divided among several deputy ministers, so that no individual could use it as a long-term power base, and probably also to dilute the StB's sense of a distinct corporate identity.

One last challenge was to revive the informer networks. Before 1968, the StB had relied in an average year on more than 17,000 citizens to spy on family, friends, neighbours and colleagues, but this number had been falling steadily as agents ending their collaboration outstripped those being recruited. With the suspension of most domestic operations in spring 1968, the number on the books plunged by 41 per cent. In all of 1969, only 144 new informers were added. There was some growth in 1970 and 1971, but then in 1972 Minister Kaska ordered a review that
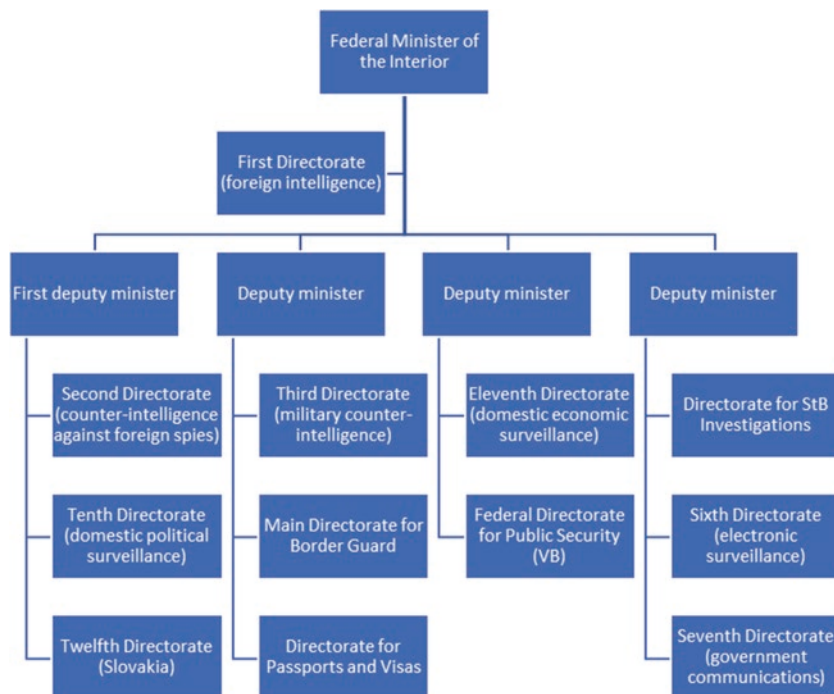
Fig. 6.1 Simplified organisational structure of the StB, 1974–1988, based on P. Žáček and P. Blažek, 'Československo' in K. Persak, Ł. Kamiński, P. Žáček and P. Blažek (eds), *Čekisté: Orgány státní bezpečnosti v evropských zemích sovětského bloku 1944–1989* (Prague, 2019), pp. 255–470 (here pp. 305–6)

thinned the ranks again. After reaching a nadir at the end of 1972, the number of informers almost doubled in 1973 and by the end of 1976 had swelled to 10,038. As before 1968, turnover also remained high, so even in 1980 the estimated total stood at 12,566, still well below pre-1968 levels.[13]

An Early Case Study: Operation OLINA

These multiple causes of turbulence, and not just Husák's reluctance to make martyrs out of reformers, explain why there were relatively few political trials in the first years of normalisation, at least by comparison to

Hungary after 1956.[14] The StB simply was not in a position to put together cases that would satisfy procurators and judges who were still prone, in Husák's words, to 'liberalism and clemency towards criminal acts of various kinds'.[15] Time and resources were also consumed by the decision in 1970 to prosecute *in absentia* 66,534 citizens who had left the country after August 1968, so their property could be redistributed. Following KGB practice and continuing the pre-1968 trend, the StB now relied primarily on non-carceral 'prophylactic' measures, such as pulling aside a young rowdy or disgruntled workers for a discreet chat or group intervention, on average about 5000 times per year between 1969 and 1989.[16] By comparison, the total number of people imprisoned on political grounds in the first five years of normalisation has been estimated at 1142.[17]

One member of that relatively small group was Ladislav Ján Kalina. Born in eastern Slovakia in 1913, one month after Gustáv Husák, Kalina had been a faithful member of the Communist Party since 1945, serving on the 'action committee' that purged Slovak culture after February 1948, and then welcoming the liberalisation under Dubček in 1968. Owing to his experience in film, television and radio, he became an esteemed professor and dean at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He was also beloved as the author of many satirical cabarets, in the tradition of the Czech duo Jan Werich and Jiří Voskovec, whom he began emulating while a law student and film worker in pre-war Prague. (Werich was still alive in the 1970s and periodically under StB surveillance).[18] On 28 July 1972, Kalina was convicted of sedition (*poburovanie*) under article 100 of the criminal code. To arrive at how that was possible, we need to trace the case back almost three years to its origin as a group operation focused not on Ladislav Ján Kalina, but on his wife Agneša.[19]

Eleven years younger than her husband, Agneša had built her own career in journalism, working since 1952 at the prestigious weekly of the Slovak writers' union, *Kultúrny život* ('Cultural Life'), where she rose to become editor of the performing arts rubric. Although less directly political in her reporting than some of her colleagues, she caused waves in March 1968 by interviewing the controversial writer Ladislav Mňačko, who had emigrated to Israel a year before in protest at Czechoslovakia's support for Arab states in the Six-Day War. She took part in various 'Prague Spring' initiatives, such as the national petition in support of the country's leaders during their summit with the Soviet Politburo in July 1968, but once *Kultúrny život* was shut down after the invasion and she

transferred to a periodical focused on film and television, she seemed an unlikely target for the ŠtB. So why go after her in the late summer of 1969?

For a Soviet-bloc security service, someone became a person of interest—either as a suspect or potential informer—if they could be embedded in a network, and the wider the better.[20] Thanks to the multifaceted and very public nature of their careers, the Kalinas could ostensibly be linked by the ŠtB to 536 people.[21] Then, because they were Jewish, they could be slotted into the enemy category of 'Zionists', and connected to global conspiratorial 'centres'.[22] Furthermore, again because of their work, they had both travelled abroad frequently, to Western film festivals and theatres. And Agneša Kalinová was particularly suspect owing to her fluency in many languages, because of which she was often contacted by Western journalists and diplomats. Such ease in multiple languages would have been especially alien to the monoglot ŠtB captain, Ján Maťáš, who was overseeing their case.

The origins of Operation OLINA against the Kalinas and others cannot be reconstructed precisely, owing to the routine shredding of parts of the dossier, so even a relatively intact case like this one is still an incomplete record. The trail starts on 9 September 1969, when Captain Maťáš formally opened an operational file on Agneša as the *objekt* (main target) suspected of hostile intelligence activity. The following day, he requested that a bug be planted in the Kalinas' weekend cottage (*chata*), in the hills about twenty kilometres from their flat in Bratislava's Old Town. On 18 September 1969, when Agneša was overheard speaking French with a Canadian diplomat at an exhibition, it was proposed that a bug be planted in their flat as well. It was expected that these devices would capture the Kalinas and their guests talking candidly and cogently about their contacts, opinions and intentions.

The bug was easily planted in the *chata*, as it was vacant during the week and its lock could be picked. Getting a device into their flat, however, turned into a comedy of errors. First, the Bratislava ŠtB's sixth department, which handled electronic surveillance, needed a duplicate of the key to ensure a smooth entry that would neither attract neighbours' attention nor leave tell-tale signs of damage. They contrived to get access to the belongings of the Kalinas' teenage daughter Júlia while she was in PE at school, with the help of a local police (VB) officer who told the teacher that they needed to search students' bags for contraband pornography. Impressions were taken of Júlia's keys on 17 October 1969, from which duplicates could be cut. Once in the flat, the ŠtB's technicians

would need one and a half hours to install two devices, one in the sitting room and one in Ladislav's study. The challenge was to find a bloc of sufficient time in which all three residents of the flat would be out. Even with the help of a tap on the Kalinas' phone, the ŠtB was repeatedly thwarted. It was not until 17 July 1970, 302 days after it was proposed, that the bugs could be installed and activated.

The eavesdropping that followed did help the ŠtB in tracking who visited the Kalinas, but judging by the surviving transcripts from the bug in the *chata*, it was soon clear that these were not conversations that revealed Agneša as a master spy. While we commonly think of the *chata* as a zone of free speech, for the most part the Kalinas talked amongst themselves about ordinary family matters. When a guest visited, it was often not clear who they were, who they were talking about from the large cast of mutual acquaintances, or even what language they were speaking (Agneša at times shifted between Slovak, Hungarian and German). Speakers talked over each other, suddenly changed topics, moved out of range or lowered their voices. An interim assessment of the *chata* bug's value at the end of 1969 concluded that it provided information about the *objekt*'s contacts and outlook, but no evidence of espionage for the USA or Israel.[23] Although Agneša would later be arrested along with Ladislav and held for questioning, charges against her were dropped.

Once the Bratislava flat was under surveillance, the ŠtB turned its attention more and more to Ladislav, and the operation mutated into a search for evidence of sedition in the form of humour. One of Ladislav's projects since 1965 had been to jot down jokes he came across in magazines, books and conversations, and categorise them by topic. Most were not political, but perhaps one-tenth were. In 1966 he pitched the idea of a book of 1001 of these jokes, and it was accepted by the publisher *Obzor*. Had the book appeared as planned in 1967, it would not have got Ladislav into trouble later; instead, technical hitches pushed publication into autumn 1968, at which point he felt obliged to update the political jokes to reflect the mood just after the invasion. Publication was delayed yet again, into spring 1969, and Kalina again felt the need to replace certain jokes to reflect the 'consolidation process'. For example, he took out one that became well known internationally ('Which country is the most neutral in the world? Czechoslovakia—it doesn't even intervene in its own affairs'[24]) and inserted one about the poor condition of roads. The book finally reached the shops and sold out quickly in summer 1969.

One of the topics of conversation the bug in the flat picked up in summer and autumn 1970 was whether Ladislav should try to publish a version of his joke book in the West. He had friends in Austria and Belgium who could assist, and who—depending on how the file is read—may have been the instigators. He began to sketch out the book's gist and structure, but abandoned it in October 1970, largely because he felt trapped between the likely expectations of a Western publisher (who would want the book to be entirely political and show the East in a bad light) and his desire to get a new, mostly non-political collection onto the Slovak market, a not inconceivable goal since he had yet to be expelled from the Communist Party or fired from his job.

By February 1971, both of those disasters had befallen him. To add to their anxiety, the Kalinas began to suspect they were being followed and bugged, which was confirmed when a downstairs neighbour reported that he was hearing their conversations on his radio receiver, meaning that something must be transmitting them.[25] This prompted Ladislav to inspect his study closely, whereupon he discovered a device planted under the floorboards. From that point onwards, he and Agneša exercised supreme caution at home, playing music and speaking quietly to frustrate the listeners. The ŠtB used an informant, a radio engineer Ladislav had trusted for years, to verify that indeed the Kalinas now assumed they were under surveillance. Horrified by this 'deconspiration', the ŠtB removed the devices from the flat on 17 July 1971, ending 3320 hours of eavesdropping (bugs at the *chata* were also removed, two days later). As bugs in other ongoing cases had similarly been found, the federal StB and Slovak Main Directorate conducted internal inquiries to determine whether someone was tipping off the subjects of surveillance, out of sympathy or a grudge in connection with the purge. The official result of the inquiries was inconclusive but showed that inadvisably large numbers of people were involved, forty-one in the matter of the Kalinas' *chata* alone. It may have been this affair that prompted the transfer of responsibility for the surveillance from the Bratislava ŠtB to the Slovak Main Directorate in August 1971.[26]

With the bugs out, the ŠtB resolved to salvage OLINA by targeting Ladislav primarily on material evidence that reflected and—as the ŠtB saw it—tried to influence popular opinion: the various drafts of *A Thousand and One Jokes* and of a cabaret he scripted for the Bratislava city theatre in summer 1969; the sketch of a jokes book for publication abroad; leaflets and foreign books that he had obtained and filed away in his massive collection, some of which the bug had caught him showing to a Soviet writer

in January 1971; an essay he composed in summer 1970 debunking an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory of the Prague Spring pushed by the Slovak daily *Pravda*; and recordings of protest songs by Czech singers such as Karel Kryl that had been purchased in shops or taped from the radio before they were banned. It was the slimmest basis for sedition charges, but the ŠtB called in almost seventy of the Kalinas' acquaintances for questioning and their testimonies would be framed to make Ladislav's professional and private interests sound sinister (later, the court's judgement would rely heavily on witness statements). The ŠtB also paid six 'experts' from the Party Central Committee and the censor's office to write 'analyses' identifying the suspect writings—including *A Thousand and One Jokes* in its final, toned-down form—as anti-socialist, anti-Soviet and Zionist.

After their arrest on 31 January 1972, the Kalinas' main defence was that the materials that they showed or played to a few like-minded friends had never been listed on a consultable index of forbidden items, and were shared only in the privacy of their home, never lent out or circulated as part of a concerted effort. To the ŠtB, however, there was no innocent private space, especially once they had punctured it with their eavesdropping. Ladislav's academic, almost ethnographic, methods of collecting and categorising jokes in a card index sounded suspiciously similar to their own work, insofar as he too was tracking popular opinion.[27] Furthermore, the law required only that a minimum of two people be exposed to objectionable material for it to count as seditious incitement. Ladislav was sentenced by the Bratislava city court to two years in Ilava prison, primarily for composing an essay about anti-Semitism that was never submitted to any periodical, for outlining a book of jokes that was never sent to any foreign publisher, and for playing music that had been lawfully obtained. After a clinical diagnosis of severe depression, he was released under President Svoboda's amnesty on 23 February 1973, timed to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the communist seizure of power. It also happened to be Ladislav's sixtieth birthday.

Even with their file to hand, it is hard to determine just why the ŠtB pursued this case all the way to court, rather than stop with the prophylactic measures and invitations to 'self-criticism' that they offered others, such as Agneša's former colleague Pavol Števček.[28] Word of Kalina's conviction would have spread quickly in Slovak intellectual circles, so it might have been intended to have a chilling effect on them, but it received almost no official coverage, so it was not used to send a message to the wider public about the limits of privacy.[29] The officers may have truly believed

that Agneša was guilty of something, and kept hoping to find evidence (they continued to spy periodically on the Kalinas after Ladislav was released from prison, until they emigrated to West Germany in 1978). Or it may just have been an opportunity to test operational capabilities, to find out what would pass muster with procurators and courts, and to have something to show for the ŠtB's expanse and expenditure.

'Active Measures' Against 'Ideological Diversion'

When the Kalinas settled in Munich, Agneša found work at the US-funded Radio Free Europe, itself an object of interest to a different part of the StB, the First Directorate for operations abroad. Of all the parts of the StB, the First Directorate had been the most in favour of reform in 1968 and was hit hard by the post-invasion purge, which forced out one-quarter of its staff, and by the defection to the West of initially eight serving officers, with more following in subsequent years.[30] A former officer, Adolf Müller, never returned from a visit to West Germany and in 1971 founded Index, one of the most important exile publishing houses. The directorate also lost twenty of its foreign agents, in some cases (such as British MPs John Stonehouse and Will Owen) because defectors exposed them.[31]

Nevertheless, the Soviets decided that the situation was not as dire as in Hungary after 1956, when the entire intelligence directorate had to be rebuilt from scratch. By 1973, the 200 lost officers were being replaced by young recruits, who were sent to Moscow for training.[32] And soon the First Directorate could boast of some apparent successes, the most famous of which were the moles Pavel Minařík (at Radio Free Europe) and Karel Köcher (at the CIA). But what did they actually accomplish, as sources of information, agents of disruption or celebrities back home?

While some of the First Directorate's espionage was conventional to obtain political, economic and scientific secrets, much of it took the form of opinion-shaping 'active measures'—a mix of disinformation and demonisation abroad, and attempts at home to popularise and mythologise the work of security officers. The directorate's 'active measures' section suspended its work after August 1968, because its director, Jiří Stejskal, had been one of the most avid reformists, and his former deputy, Ladislav Bittman, had defected to the US. By summer 1969, the First Directorate was sufficiently normalised to resume operations against 'ideological diversion', namely, Western-based competitors for influence on hearts and minds in Czechoslovakia, such as the Vatican, émigré

journalists, and (from 1977) Amnesty International.[33] The top target was Radio Free Europe (RFE), which was regarded as a rival intelligence community: it secretly received information from sources inside Czechoslovakia, perhaps even in the Central Committee, and many of its on-air presenters, like StB officers, worked under pseudonyms. Since 1953, the StB had sought to lessen RFE's impact not just by jamming its signal, but also by trying to undermine its credibility. One grandiose plan, probably from 1970, included a scheme to mock RFE in official satirical publications, have agents inject jokes about it into general circulation, and try to get people to say that someone 'lies like Radio Free Europe' as a common expression.[34] Results on the whole failed to match ambition and hard-currency expenditure; the StB had had virtually no collaborators among RFE employees at the time of the 1968 invasion, and most attempts to plant or acquire them in the 1970s also failed, in one case because the agent was exposed by his handler's sloppy tradecraft.[35]

The exception was Pavel Minařík, a young journalist who was recruited in 1967 and sent to the West under the cover of the post-invasion exodus in September 1968. By the end of the year, he had been hired at RFE. He was in place until January 1976, providing a stream of reports, photographs and internal documents.[36] He also used his RFE affiliation as entrée to the wider community of Czech émigré organisations, and his reports on them were valued by the First Directorate more highly than what he sent about RFE itself, much of which was just stairwell gossip.[37] Minařík revived the idea, entertained by the StB in 1957 and 1966, of planting a bomb in the RFE building, either to knock it off the air or compel the West German government to evict it, but Prague feared the likely backlash (it had only just established diplomatic relations with Bonn) and harm to détente, with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe nearing its conclusion.[38] Instead, the Soviet bloc agitated to get the US Congress to reduce RFE's budget. The price of their success was that Minařík's position was among those cut, at which point he returned to Czechoslovakia.

No StB agent after Minařík's return was able to gain comparable access to RFE, and even Minařík probably inflicted little operational or reputational damage; estimates suggest that between 1973 and 1988, the weekly share of adults in Czechoslovakia reached by RFE held steady at 30–35 per cent.[39] Minařík certainly did less physical damage than Carlos the Jackal, who actually did bomb it (at Romania's request) in February 1981.[40] The StB struggled to figure out who in Czechoslovakia was

passing information to RFE and how they communicated, although they estimated that fifty to eighty calls were being made every day in the mid-1980s to RFE's automated answering service.[41] At the root of it all was a problem that bedevils intelligence services worldwide: 'Members of the StB in Czechoslovakia did not know real life in the German Federal Republic, the real situation in exile groups and at RFE. From their office desks, not trying to see their opponent free of ideological clichés, they mindlessly just kept trying to show activity in keeping with the guidelines for agent-operative work'.[42]

After his return in 1976, Minařík became useful to the StB in another way: the hero of a lavish public relations campaign to discredit RFE as a CIA front. A prime example of the state-sponsored celebrity under socialism (like the fictional detective on television at the time, 'Major Zeman'), Minařík was even fêted in a funky pop song, 'Letter to Free Europe', by StB collaborator Josef Laufer.[43] Another agent, Ervín Marák, secretly recorded conversations with RFE staff and his tapes were edited into a six-part series for Czechoslovak Radio.[44] In January 1977, dusting off programming that had been in the works before the Prague Spring, Czechoslovak Television ran an exposé of British intelligence and a four-part feature on Glen Roy Rohrer, a US Army intelligence officer and polygraph expert who had defected to Czechoslovakia in 1965.[45] To produce more of this material, the StB in 1977 created its Ninth Directorate for 'political-educational, cultural and propagation activity', about which little has so far been written.

Why was there no comparable fanfare for Karel Köcher upon his return a decade later, given that he was the only (known) agent from a Soviet-bloc country to work inside the CIA?[46] Although he was in the US for almost twenty years, he actively spied at the CIA for only two of them, and what he produced was helpful not to the StB but to Soviet counter-espionage, mainly in the southern hemisphere and Near East.[47] Unlike Minařík, he was caught by the FBI, shortly before he and his wife Hana, also an StB agent whose talent was woefully under-utilised, were about to give up on the US and relocate to Austria. As some in the StB feared that the choleric Köcher might be a double or even triple agent, it is not surprising that his repatriation as part of a spy swap in 1986 went unheralded.

The Köchers' tale shows that working relations between the StB and KGB had been fully restored under a 1972 inter-agency agreement. In another sign of trust, the StB was invited in 1977 to contribute to the KGB-managed SOUD database of 200,000 'enemy persons' (Agneša

Kalinová was one of forty Slovak RFE employees included), and to establish stations under diplomatic cover (*rezidentury*) in other socialist capitals.[48] One such location was Warsaw, which was soon a hotspot owing to the formation of the independent trade union Solidarity in 1980. The StB's response, Operation SEVER (North), was its largest multilateral undertaking during normalisation, with one line of measures aimed at influencing popular opinion in Czechoslovakia, one in Poland, and another at informing Czechoslovakia's leaders about developments on both fronts.[49]

On the domestic side, the StB's Eleventh (economic) Directorate focused on preventing copycat unrest in Czechoslovakia's working class.[50] From August 1980, the StB watched 648 factories, with the help of more than 2000 collaborators, and singled out more than 20,000 individuals as potential troublemakers, mostly for their criminal records but also for involvement in the briefly independent trade unions of 1968–1969.[51] While there was a spike in listening to Western radio news coverage, the StB reported that Czechs and Slovaks saw Poland's crisis as specific to its lower standard of living caused by corruption, dependence on Western credit and non-collectivised agriculture.[52] Far from finding any contagion effect, the StB reported widespread grumbling about Poles crossing over to stock up in Czech stores, and fears that Czechoslovakia would itself experience shortages or price rises as a result.[53] The brother of the imprisoned writer Václav Havel was recorded as saying that 'events similar to the Polish cannot happen in Czechoslovakia because there is a strong power apparatus in our country and the population's living conditions are also much better than in Poland'.[54]

For operations inside Poland, the StB's branch in northern Moravia recruited collaborators from the region's Polish minority to improve the language of anti-Solidarity radio broadcasts and writings that the StB's Warsaw *rezidentura* circulated.[55] In spring 1981, the Tenth Directorate (for domestic political surveillance) identified dozens of its informers, including Catholic priests, who they thought could be deployed to encourage the hundreds of 'positive' persons in Poland being profiled by the StB. Most of these informers were operationally marginal and their product was junk, which directorate chiefs acknowledged by appealing for quality over quantity, but the sheer volume of incoming chatter allowed the StB to appear to be proactive and privy to special insights.[56] The feather in their cap was a Czech language instructor in Poland who posed

as courier between signatories of Charter 77 and members of the human rights group Committee for Social Self-Defence (KSS 'KOR') in Wrocław, thereby betraying their communications while trying to sow distrust and discord.[57] In case Poland's allies were asked by Moscow or Warsaw to intervene by force, the StB's Third Directorate (military counter-intelligence) assessed the Czechoslovak army's readiness. They claimed that morale was excellent, although a few army officers, like some factory workers, complained that Czechoslovakia's elite was in danger of repeating the mistake of their Polish counterparts, by becoming a privileged caste 'misusing state resources for their personal needs'.[58]

Finally, the StB was expected to inform Czechoslovakia's leaders of developments in Poland based on its secret sources, including its surveillance of the Polish embassy in Prague and all mail between the two countries. In 1980 and into 1981 this consisted of a raw feed of rumours and trivia, although there was at least no tendency to bundle them into a simplistic conspiracy theory. By June 1981 it was decided that the StB needed a 'qualitative' organisational change, in the form of a crisis staff that would sift the wheat from the chaff of informers' reports and coordinate the various efforts to influence popular opinion.[59] From this point, developments in Poland were framed in a familiar normalisation narrative but with the threat of 'counter-revolution' even more menacing.

The StB certainly gave decision-makers plenty of warning of the possibility of martial law in Poland, mentioning it regularly from November 1980.[60] Thanks to the military attaché at the Warsaw embassy, the StB had a sense that something was afoot by 9 December 1981, and the federal interior minister was alerted on 11 December, two days before the state of emergency was declared. Here too there was the appearance of success: disaster in Poland had seemingly been averted and Czechoslovak society barely stirred. The Tenth Directorate quickly canvassed 300 of its informers and was pleased to hear that 'hostile persons in Czechoslovakia are scared' and there was no danger of sympathy protests.[61]

Routine Work Close to Home

As the Polish crisis peaked, so the StB seemed to be at the height of its post-1968 recovery. No Solidarity-style mass movement had arisen, and the small dissident movement was at its most diminished and downcast, owing to a prolonged campaign of vilification in the state media, much of

it crafted with StB help.[62] The StB also targeted prominent individuals for imprisonment and long periods of detention; hounded others into exile; fomented quarrels and drove in wedges.[63] But anti-dissident work involved relatively small sections of the very large StB; what was life like for an officer not in Prague, Brno or Bratislava?

Judging by Prokop Tomek's case study of the district of Havlíčkův Brod in eastern Bohemia, the service was spread quite thinly on the ground: for a population of around 100,000 over 1265 km², the local StB had two officers for each of the three main lines: (1) Western visitors, residents' travels to the West and the tiny German minority; (2) dissidents, young people and churches; (3) factories, farms and railways.[64] If one officer was off sick or away on a training course, whole sectors might be neglected for months at a time. If electronic surveillance was needed, Havlíčkův Brod had to compete with ten other districts for the services of specialists from the regional office in Hradec Králové.

In this environment, officers were especially reliant on their informers, who were divided into agents (those could be assigned tasks and targets), confidants (*důverníci*) who reported more casually on their colleagues or neighbours, and the *aktiv* of enterprise managers, personnel directors, school principals, and so on, who were not registered collaborators but often helped with inquiries and prophylactic interventions.[65] Once their ranks were replenished after 1972, the average number of informers in Havlíčkův Brod was around 100, for a district with almost that many towns and villages.[66] Some agents were very keen, such as the Catholic priest Josef Němeček, who informed on parishioners from 1953 to 1989 and was often recognised by the district StB as its top asset.[67] Because of the destruction of files in December 1989, however, it is impossible to generalise about the impact of district-level informers. Tomek estimates that their main effect, when combined with officers' prophylactic measures, was to help maintain the illusion that the StB had eyes and ears everywhere, thereby creating a culture of self-censorship and self-restraint.[68] In most years during normalisation, only one or two cases were referred for full investigation and possible prosecution.

In a quiet district like Havlíčkův Brod, the StB's primary duty was to look for trouble in the local economy. In larger cities the StB sometimes took down—to media acclaim—the occasional black marketeer, such as Jozef Zelík in Bratislava.[69] But in eastern Bohemia there were no such kingpins or they had political protection, so officers pursued fantasies of sabotage, terrorism and espionage, especially by purged party members.

In the state-wide sweep of industry during and after the Polish crisis, the Havlíčkův Brod StB identified around 250 people to watch in forty-three enterprises, but none did anything to warrant action. The largest firm, the metal-works Kovofiniš, had been the subject of an *objekt* dossier from 1974, but the file was closed in 1986 as the three agents and one confidant among the 2000 employees had nothing of concern to report.[70]

Modest Reform with Grand Ambition

Up to the last weeks of 1989, the country as a whole was a lot like Havlíčkův Brod. This meant that year after year, the StB could tick over, by and large using the same methods and interpreting popular opinion through the same framework. There were moments of reorganisation, prompted in part by security breaches (it was discovered in 1976 that a recently deceased counter-intelligence officer on the UK desk had been a British agent).[71] But like the economy, the StB remained 'extensive' in its reliance on low-productivity labour and wasteful use of resources relative to results.

Like the economy and the party, the StB underwent a hesitant restructuring in response to the challenge of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union.[72] As in the 1960s, reforms needed a patron, in this case Alojz Lorenc, who was promoted from chief of the ŠtB in western Slovakia to deputy federal interior minister in late 1985. The plans developed under his aegis in late 1988 and into 1989 assumed continuity of the political status quo until at least 1995 while aspiring to *zkvalitnění*—'improving quality', in particular recruiting new officers from university graduates rather than customary working-class backgrounds.[73] Central and regional offices would be slimmed down through mergers of departments and by transferring staff to the district level. Caught up in the late normalisation vogue for 'prognostics', the StB aimed to achieve systematic forecasting capability by the end of 1992. It was already at work on converting its index of files on 800,000 people into a digital database, and planned to build up an integrated computer network with access points in all counter-intelligence offices by the end of 1993, so that old tools of running agents and disinformation games could be guided by novel 'mathematical and statistical methods of analysis'. In 1989 itself, the StB vowed to mount deft psychological counter-operations, in the form of fake independent groups, bogus *samizdat* publications, rival petitions against the demands of 'illegal structures', and other seemingly authentic appeals, especially to the young.[74] It

seemed the StB stood on the cusp of a new era of sophistication. Instead, it would end the year in the crudest possible fashion, hurriedly obeying Lorenc's order to destroy many of its files as the 'Velvet Revolution' unfolded.

Conclusion: The StB and Normalisation

By and large, normalisation was understood at the StB, at first grudgingly, in the terms set by the Communist Party's leaders, in that there would be no wave of arrests and trials for things done or said before the invasion. When individuals associated with the reforms were charged and imprisoned, it was for acts committed after Husák came to power and especially after the sham legislative elections in November 1971. In one of the few official commentaries on the trials that followed in 1972, published ten days before Ladislav Ján Kalina was convicted of sedition, the daily *Rudé právo* reminded readers:

> The leading representatives of our party and state have already declared many times that no one shall be persecuted in Czechoslovakia for their political opinions and convictions. It has, however, been stressed several times that varying political opinions and convictions do not entitle anyone to tear down with impunity, through criminal activity in conflict with the laws, everything that entire generations of the best members of our nations fought for and died.[75]

While the StB remained a force largely drawn from the working class, during normalisation it sent more and more of its officers to law school, including the Captain (later Major) Ján Maťáš, who was studying long-distance while pursuing the Kalinas. Maťáš completed the three-year course one month before Ladislav's trial, and the following year he was sent to Moscow to learn Russian, his first and only foreign language. The StB represented the sharp end of normalisation's implicit understanding between state and society, that there would be rule *by* law rather than rule *of* law, and what constituted infractions of the law would be left vague to maximise the state's discretion, but 'socialist legality' was not purely ornamental.[76] As Agneša Kalinová's example shows, the StB could not put everyone it considered suspicious in prison; getting an accurate picture of how many such cases were vetoed by party officials, rejected by procurators or thrown out by judges between 1969 and 1989 would be a ripe topic for future research.

Notes

1. On the salience of popular opinion in socialist countries, see K. McDermott, 'A "Polyphony of Voices"? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slánský Affair', *Slavic Review*, vol. 67, no. 4 (2008), pp. 840–65, and M. Blaive, 'Introduction', in M. Blaive (ed.), *Perceptions of Society in Communist Europe: Regime Archives and Popular Opinion* (London, 2019), pp. 1–12.

2. J. Otava, 'Public Opinion Research in Czechoslovakia', *Social Research*, vol. 55, nos 1–2 (1988), pp. 247–60; K. Williams, 'The Prague Spring: From Elite Liberalisation to Mass Movement', in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe (eds), *Revolution and Resistance in Eastern Europe: Challenges to Communist Rule* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 101–17 (here pp. 110–12).

3. When referring to State Security in general I will use its Czech acronym, StB, since its federal command operated primarily in Czech. When referring to State Security specifically in Slovakia, I will refer to it as the ŠtB.

4. K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 210–21.

5. Ibid., pp. 221–4.

6. As yet, no evidence has emerged from archives to confirm the conspiracy theory that the StB provoked a crowd into demolishing the Soviet airline's office in Prague in March 1969, which precipitated Dubček's downfall. See J. Kalous, 'ČSSR—okupanti 4:3', *Paměť a dějiny*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2009), pp. 22–43.

7. J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Kapitulace (srpen-listopad 1968)* (Prague and Brno, 2001), p. 444.

8. P. Cajthaml, 'Public relations pro Státní bezpečnost: Bezpečnostní propaganda v letech 1968–1971', *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek 6* (Prague, 2008), pp. 191–241.

9. J. Suk, 'Utopian Rationalism of the Prague Spring', *American Historical Review*, vol. 123, no. 3 (2018), pp. 764–8.

10. P. Žáček and P. Blažek, 'Československo' in K. Persak, Ł. Kamiński, P. Žáček and P. Blažek (eds), *Čekisté: Orgány státní bezpečnosti v evropských zemích sovětského bloku 1944–1989* (Prague, 2019), pp. 255–470 (here pp. 331–2).

11. K. Williams and D. Deletant, *Security Intelligence Services in New Democracies: The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 32.

12. J. Sivoš, 'Centrála ŠtB na Slovensku: Vznik, vývoj a zánik Hlavnej správy Štátnej bezpečnosti Slovenskej socialistickej republiky (1969–1974)', *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek 9* (Prague, 2011), pp. 271–322.

13. Žáček and Blažek, 'Československo', pp. 374–9.

14. In Hungary between 1956 and 1959, approximately 26,000 people were charged and 22,000 sentenced, while another 13,000 people were

interned. See Cs. Békés, 'New Findings on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution', *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1992), pp. 1–3 (here p. 3).

15. Quoted in J. Cuhra, 'Soudní perzekuce opozice na počátku normalizace', in J. Cuhra and V. Veber, *Za svobodu a demokracii I. Odpor proti komunistické moci* (Prague, 1999), pp. 130–44 (here p. 133).

16. P. Tomek, 'Prevence, profylaxe a výchova v pojetí Státní bezpečnosti', *Sborník archivu bezpečnostních složek 5* (Prague, 2007), pp. 155–81. See also P. Žáček, 'KGB na cestě ke komunismu', *Pamäť národa*, vol.1, no. 1 (2005), pp. 42–57.

17. Cuhra, 'Soudní perzekuce opozice', pp. 135 and 142. This figure would be higher if we included prosecutions based on less obviously political articles of the criminal code, such as 'disorderly conduct' (výtržnictví). See J. Pažout, *Trestněprávní perzekuce odpůrců režimu v Československu v období takzvané normalizace (1969–1989)* (Prague, 2017), p. 30.

18. L. Kopecký, 'Akce "Čára 2": Sledování Jana Wericha příslušníky Správy sledování Státní bezpečnosti', in J. Petráš and L. Svoboda (eds), *Bezčasí: Československo v letech 1972–1977* (Prague and České Budějovice, 2018), pp. 318–26.

19. I base my reconstruction on the case dossier now held in the Archive of the Institute for National Memory (AÚPN), f. KS ZNB S ŠtB Bratislava, 'Vyšetrovacie zväzky, vyšetrovací spis k prípadu Jána Ladislava Kaliny', a. č. V-9210. Specific documents cited below are contained in that file. I am immensely grateful to the Kalinas' daughter, Júlia Sherwood, for providing a copy of the file. A summary can also be found in Pažout, *Trestněprávní perzekuce odpůrců režimu*, pp. 415–18.

20. K. Verdery, *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police* (Budapest and New York, 2014), pp. 189–97.

21. 'Vyhodnotenie materiálov k činnosti osôb rozpracovaných v prípade "OLINA"', čís. zv. 11223, dated 23 January 1972 (p. 751 of the investigative file).

22. For context, see P. Salner, 'Podoby antisemitizmu na Slovensku v období normalizácie (1969–1989)', in M. Vrzgulová, H. Kubátová et al., *Podoby antisemitizmu v Čechách a na Slovensku ve 20. a 21. století* (Prague, 2016), pp. 139–56. On the StB's anti-'Zionist' operations, see the two articles by O. Koutek, 'Akce "Pavouk"' and 'Útvar StB pro boj proti sionismu', in *Pamět' a dějiny*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2017), pp. 40–54 and 64–76; and J. Hlavinka, 'Židovská komunita pod kontrolou', *Pamäť národa*, vol.1, no. 2 (2005), pp. 20–32.

23. AÚPN, KS SNB—Správa Štátnej bezpečnosti Bratislava, 6.odbor 1.oddelenie, dňa 7.1.1970, 'Vyhodnotenie úkonu C-7 v akcii "OLINA"'.

24. A joke reported, for example, in K. C. Cole, 'Prague, Two Years After', *The New York Times Magazine*, 16 August 1970, p. 7.

25. A. Kalinová, *Mojich 7 životov* (Bratislava, 2012), pp. 283–4.
26. Sivoš, 'Centrála ŠtB na Slovensku', p. 307.
27. On the similarities between espionage and anthropology, see K. Verdery, *My Life as a Spy: Investigations in a Secret Police File* (Durham and London, 2018), pp. 17–18.
28. J. L. Larson, *Critical Thinking in Slovakia after Socialism* (Rochester, NY, 2013), pp. 124–9.
29. Radio Free Europe Research, *Czechoslovak Situation Report*, no. 35, 11 October 1972, p. 7.
30. D. Běloušek, 'Akce PANT: Příběh Vlastimila Ludvíka, posledního defektora komunistické rozvědky', *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek 6* (Prague, 2008), pp. 243–60.
31. P. Kaňák, J. Dvořáková and Z. Jurová, *Československá rozvědka a Pražské jaro* (Prague, 2016), pp. 69–75.
32. Kaňák, Dvořáková and Jurová, *Československá rozvědka a Pražské jaro*, p. 77.
33. See P. Cajthaml, 'Politický úkol: Aktivní opatření v období krize komunistického režimu', *Securitas imperii 17* (Prague, 2010), pp. 80–105; R. Schovánek, 'Hovory z druhé strany: Jak StB rozehrála hru proti redakci Tigridova časopisu *Svědectví*', HlídacíPes.org, 13 March 2020, at https://hlidacipes.org/hovory-z-druhe-strany-jak-stb-rozehrala-hru-proti-redakci-tigridova-casopisu-svedectvi/ (last accessed 4 August 2021); and P. Tomek, 'Činnost kontrarozvědky StB proti Amnesty International v dochovaných dokumentech', *Securitas imperii 28* (Prague, 2016), pp. 276–318.
34. Cajthaml, 'Politický úkol', p. 104.
35. P. Tomek, *'Objekt ALFA': Československé bezpečnostní složky proti Rádiu Svobodná Evropa* (Prague, 2006), pp. 77–96 and 111–22.
36. I. Koutská and P. Žáček, 'Radio Free Europe through the Eyes of the State Security Service', in *Behind the Iron Curtain 2* (Prague, 2012), pp. 152–61.
37. Tomek, *'Objekt ALFA'*, pp. 96–9.
38. Ibid., p. 101.
39. 'APPENDIX C: Weekly Listening Rates for Major Western Broadcasters to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and the USSR During the Cold War', in A. R. Johnson and R. E. Parta (eds), *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Budapest, 2010), p. 143.
40. Tomek, *'Objekt ALFA'*, pp. 163–4. On the StB's ambivalence towards international terrorists like Ilich Ramírez Sánchez (a.k.a. Carlos the Jackal), see D. Richterova, 'The Anxious Host: Czechoslovakia and Carlos the Jackal 1978–1986', *The International History Review*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2018), pp. 108–32.
41. Tomek, *'Objekt ALFA'*, p. 172.

42. Ibid., p. 212.
43. Ibid., pp. 141–6. On 'Major Zeman', see J. Dvořáková, 'Jak se točil serial "Třicet případů majora Zemana"', *Sborník Archivu Ministerstva vnitra 1* (Prague, 2003), pp. 91–9; P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, 2010), pp. 74–83.
44. Tomek, *'Objekt ALFA'*, p. 134.
45. P. Cajthaml, 'Televizní pořad Vysoká hra: Příběh jedné pomluvy', *Securitas imperii 9* (Prague, 2002), pp. 258–68; P. Cajthaml, 'BELL aneb Příběh zrádce', *Securitas imperii 13* (Prague, 2006), pp. 5–36 (here pp. 29–30).
46. The definitive account is V. Ševela, *Český krtek v CIA* (Prague, 2015). See also B. Cunningham, 'How a Czech "super-spy" infiltrated the CIA', *The Guardian*, 30 June 2016, at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/30/how-a-czech-super-spy-infiltrated-cia-karel-koecher (last accessed 4 August 2021).
47. P. Žáček, 'Případ "Rino": náš člověk v CIA. Řízení čs. špičkové agentury sovětskou rozvědkou, 1973–1976', *Securitas imperii 29* (Prague, 2016), pp. 190–242.
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Twenty Years in Shades of Grey? Everyday Life During Normalisation Based on Oral History Research

Miroslav Vaněk

Every year I begin my master's course on the history of normalisation at Charles University's Faculty of Humanities by asking students whether they connect the period in question with an image or a feeling. Most often, their immediate response is to attribute a grey colour to the normalisation era. More interesting than the association with a colour is the discord students instantly notice between their initial reactions and the presumably far more complicated (and obviously colourful) reality before 1989. One student noted:

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145

> I thought about the concept of 'normalisation' for the first time after the introductory lecture. Before that, I frequently talked about 'grey normalisation'. I understood it just the way it was spoken about publicly—as a grey time without movement.[1]

And a second wrote:

> A grey static time evokes something like disgust or distaste. And why would I want to study something that simultaneously disgusts and is devoid of lessons for the future? And why should any era be characterised by one simple attribute? It seems to me that people who lived through this period don't want to talk about it. But why? Do they feel awkward? Is it because research won't lead to any conclusions or because 'they' want us to think that 'normalisation' really was stagnant and grey?[2]

On account of their age, most of my students do not have personal experience of the normalisation era. The images that occur to them are secondhand. Part of the course consists of empirical research in which students are tasked with recording, analysing and interpreting an oral history with their parents or others who were adults during normalisation. These interviews focus on narrators' everyday lives. In the second semester students build on these interviews by exploring, with the help of written sources, a theme of their choice related to everyday life during normalisation. These assignments include a short reflection on the 'greyness' of the period.[3] Their work, alongside research conducted at the Czech Institute of Contemporary History's Oral History Centre, forms the basis of my reflections here.[4]

If we look critically at research into normalisation, it is clear that the initial focus of the historiography was on powerful elites and dissidents. Wider society was only mentioned in passing. Authors were generally content with the concept of the 'silent majority', sometimes positing a 'social contract' between state and society.[5] In an article in 2002, the historian Milan Otáhal wrote that 'Czech historiography still places too much emphasis on political, social and economic history, as well as research into centres of power and opposition, and all this is detrimental to research into the histories of mentalities and everyday life'.[6] A decade after Otáhal's complaint, the situation slowly started to change in the 2010s in part thanks to oral history.

Everyday Life During Normalisation

If we focus solely on the clash between power and the opposition, we describe at most 2 per cent of the Czechoslovak population, communist functionaries making up a maximum of 2 per cent of the population and the number of dissidents amounting to one hundredth of a percentile.[7] But what about the remaining 98 per cent of the population? Both before and after 1989, Czech historiography paradoxically left out the majority of society. Important questions such as how to explain the relative long-term stability of the regime and its sudden implosion at the end of the 1980s are, however, unanswerable using a 'top-down' totalitarian framework alone. It leaves more questions than answers. Did the system's persistence rest only on an apparatus of repression? Was the regime, which undoubtedly relied until the end of the 1980s on a measure of popular support (notably in Slovakia and among certain groups of society, such as workers, miners and managers), successful in its practices, though it had long ago been hollowed-out ideologically? This is where new possibilities emerge for the social and cultural history of everyday life. Indeed as German scholar Martin Sabrow puts it: 'The concept of the "history of the everyday" allows for the assessment of repeated, daily negotiations in which the public did not just react passively to orders from above. Instead, people followed their own goals, actively or passively, through their own interpretations of social bargaining and social relations'.[8]

Oral history is a useful method for such research. Projects which entail hundreds of interviews with so-called 'ordinary people' allow us to uncover the wide array of opinions and mind-sets behind everyday actions. We have encountered descriptions of individual lives without beautification, and narratives in which speakers heroicised their own fates.[9] Alongside them, however, we also have interviews which never took place, as potential narrators turned down oral histories because they did not want to 'remember the old regime positively, as that's outdated, and so they'd rather say nothing'. Others claimed that they were unsuitable candidates for an interview, because they associated the past with pleasant memories and did not recall it in a bad light.[10] As these are far from isolated cases, both oral histories and historical scholarship in general should draw attention to them.

Where Did 'Grey Normalisation' Come From?

When searching for the origins of the pejorative term 'grey normalisation' and its colourless equivalent 'stagnation' in Czechoslovak history, it is worth remembering that the period stretches over decades which were full of events—both positive and negative—and which are therefore highly symbolic. We often refer to the *dark* 1950s, the *golden* sixties, and the *colourful* or *wild* 1990s. While the first of these epithets alludes to repression, show trials and an atmosphere of fear, the two periods that follow, the first directly preceding and the second directly following 'normalisation', connote freedom and a burgeoning of possibilities. 'Grey normalisation', on the other hand, symbolises hopelessness, indistinctiveness, torpor, uncertainty, boredom and inertia in explicit contrast to the periods before and after.

Grey, paradoxically the most universal and widely-sold colour on earth today, is not to blame for these negative connotations. Just like other colours, its meaning takes shape through its use.[11] In the Czech Republic grey is, in the context of history, a synonym for flatness. In architecture, many vaunt the magic of its universality, which allows it to be combined with any other colour. Grey dominates the name of the literary bestseller *Fifty Shades of Grey* and its filmic adaptation. It charms and simultaneously holds a modicum of mystery. According to colour expert Leatrice Eiseman, grey represents endurance, reliability and timelessness, produced through the colour's connection to granite, rubble and rock.[12] The terms 'grey' and 'stagnation' spread among a wider public after the revolution, thanks mainly to the influence that dissidents and intellectuals held over the post-1989 narrative. Most famously, liberal thinker Václav Havel likened normalisation to grey, or a grey picture, in his letter to First Secretary of the Communist Party Gustáv Husák in the mid-1970s. Havel wrote that 'as uniqueness disappears from the flow of events, so too does continuity; everything merges into the *single grey image* [emphasis my own] of one and the same cycle and we say, "there is nothing happening"'.[13] It is necessary to point out that Havel's texts were not widely accessible before 1989, circulating largely among small groups of people in *samizdat* form. A wider public gained access to his texts only after the Velvet Revolution.

On account of his profession, interests and attitudes, the normalisation period was indeed a stagnant grey time for Havel. But he employed a different frame of reference than most of the population. The majority had different needs which, on the basis of the 'social contract', they could

more or less fulfil in their private lives.[14] Havel performed the role of an intellectual as social safety-valve successfully—he highlighted a situation that was far from perfect. It is, however, unsatisfactory and misleading to use his experience, or the experiences of other persecuted dissidents, to characterise and label in retrospect an entire historical era. Oral historians must be extremely careful not to project on to people an interpretive framework that emerges from a set of priorities of another section of society. This approach will either lead respondents to misrepresent their own memories during interviews or will leave the oral historian with no interviews at all. Such a situation is not, however, completely new. As research into collective memory shows, prevailing narratives quite commonly shape individuals' memories. The following extracts from oral history interviews are typical in this respect:

> Today people say that it was a stagnant time, that nothing happened. But that's not how I perceived it. We lived normal lives; we were simply used to things being that way.[15]

> If I'm looking back, and again this is the way that it is sort of remembered, everything was grey—life, the town. But we weren't aware of this at all when we were living it. But then in 1989 when we went to Austria the Christmas trees were glowing, and we couldn't believe our eyes.[16]

The sociologist and Charter 77 signatory Jiřina Šiklová also used grey in a seminal 1989 essay in which she introduced the concept of the 'grey zone'. According to Šiklová, those belonging to the 'grey zone' were characterised by their approach:

> … in the sphere of courage, taking a stand, in their unwillingness or inability to confront power. They are spectators to what is happening, spectators who are clearly rooting for [the oppositional] Charter 77 and other displays of independence… They are not players themselves; they aren't on the field, they are in the stands. Like fans, they occasionally cheer aloud and applaud visibly… They hold various functions, adhere to formal political rituals… They are employed within the structure, in jobs roughly in keeping with their qualifications; they are not ostracized, they want to retain the minor advantages that the regime grants those who stay within the norm. At the same time, they strive not to get 'into' anything, not to damage anyone; they are often helpful to others persecuted by the political regime.[17]

Šiklová's frame of reference is similar to that of Havel's. She analyses the 'grey zone' from the perspective of her own political activity, indeed her own active/passive relationship to power and dissent. While taking the timing of this work's publication and its dissemination shortly after the Velvet Revolution into account, Šiklová's essay can be characterised as one of the sources of 'normalisation-era greyness', albeit with quite a different meaning. The following extracts from various interviewees could be placed into Šiklová's 'grey zone':

> In the cultural world I was in what was called the 'grey zone'. I wasn't welcomed, but then nor was I completely banned. No one persecuted me. Occasionally I was called in for an interrogation. It was basically a velvet, easy life. I didn't suffer in the slightest.[18]

> Independent initiatives [for example groups like Charter 77] were missing copying equipment to spread their print materials. We wanted to help them. Thanks to several ladies in the print-shop at the Škoda factory we could print and copy some things. We managed to produce around 10,000 pages a month.[19]

In his study of dissent in western Bohemia, historian and political scientist Lukáš Valeš understands the dividing line between local dissent and the 'grey zone' to be thin and permeable:

> The division of Czech society into a so-called 'grey zone' and dissent does not work at a local level. On the contrary, the connection between these two at first glance different groups is blurred. It is often only with difficulty that we can say 'dissent ends here and the "grey zone" starts here'—if we seek to uphold Šiklová's division.[20]

Similar to Valeš's description of the activities of west Bohemian activists and the grey zone, in a 2002 monograph entitled *Islands of Freedom* I focused on the activities of a generation of youngsters in the 1980s.[21] The 'islands' encompassed an entire spectrum of activities and social groups from environmentalists to 'tramps' (hikers often using American imagery and insignia), folk, rock and punk music fans, members of film clubs, exhibition organisers and the publishers of fanzines or university newsletters. These activities also found themselves on the border between the official and the unofficial.[22]

Our wary and wavering acceptance of the term 'grey zone' is made apparent in an interview with a university student active during the Velvet Revolution in 1989. When asked whether he was politically active before 17 November 1989 (whether, for example, he signed petitions or took part in demonstrations), he responded:

> Not personally. I followed it [politics] closely, I was a fan, but I played music. I wanted to play music. I followed it in detail, already quite a lot then. Even in České Budějovice various events were taking place, and I sometimes went. I followed what was going on. I wasn't just one of the masses. I was probably passive, but I wasn't part of the 'grey zone'.[23]

The interviewee had his own hobby, sometimes crossed an imaginary line into civic activity and became active in the sense that he followed political affairs. On the other hand, he quite strongly refused to identify himself with the mass of the 'grey zone'. His stance nears Šiklová's definition. Shortly before 1989, the number of those fitting her criteria grew exponentially and started to cooperate in several areas with dissident initiatives.

But what about those who neither cooperated actively with dissent nor with the communist government? Were they opportunists or merely those left footing the blame? As historians, we still have to answer many basic questions about Czechoslovak society in all its shades. New questions emerge constantly. In *Normalizační festival*, historian Přemysl Houda writes that the 'grey zone' is a retrospective fantasy.[24] For Houda, all those who lived at the time and did not belong to either pole—power or the opposition—were in the grey zone. He thus shifts Šiklová's definition, which she applied to 'friends of dissent', to 'everything in between black (power) and white (the opposition)'.[25] New approaches will continue to build on what has come before. In my chapter, I focus only on the 'grey' that narrators (interviewees) discussed, which most frequently fell into three particular categories. In all of the following cases, 'grey' means something different, just as citizens' reactions are different. This holds true whether what is at stake is the individual (fashion), the family (living in a prefabricated block of flats), or broader society (the environment).

Grey Fashion

The search for and creation of our line of fashion was not without mistakes and bad ideas. Some people mistakenly thought that citizens of a state guided by the principles of socialism would cast all fashion aside. That they would dress only functionally and economically and that our clothing would transform into a kind of uniform. They forgot, however, that clothing also serves a decorative function, that it makes life more pleasant and satisfies our longing for change. They forgot the end goal of socialism, which is the rich development of life in every area. We simply do not want to abolish fashion nor do we want to isolate ourselves from the world of fashion.[26]

This article, which was surprisingly critical of socialist practice, appeared in the magazine *Žena a móda* (*Woman and Fashion*) in 1957. But the article could have been published practically unchanged at any point in 1977 or even 1987. For nothing truly essential regarding fashion altered as a result, except that from the 1960s onwards fashions were limited not by ideologues but by the lag in the textile and clothing industries, which were incapable of reacting flexibly to popular demand. The overall share of textiles in industrial production fell.[27] Fashion was not a priority for the socialist regime, which concentrated instead on function and cost. This explains the mass-scale use of cheap synthetic fabrics that became almost a symbol of normalisation. The fabrics' easy maintenance and low cost also had its drawbacks. They were not very breathable and so caused eczema or other skin conditions.[28]

In addition, the uniform and outdated patterns of clothing and, above all, the colours of the fabrics left much to be desired. Grey, brown and dark blue predominated. Individuals did not have the possibility to express themselves in socialist Czechoslovakia, which played into a collective understanding of society in which no one stood out too much. The regime gave preference to 'the equality of all citizens', meaning here 'the equality of all in uniformly grey fashion'. If the older generation made their peace with the established fashion status quo, young people and some middle-aged citizens regarded fashion differently. Young people seek to differentiate themselves from older sartorial taste for reasons of generational rebellion, among others. The scale of this differentiation can vary widely, spanning from small tweaks to broadly-accepted trends right up to the wearing of non-conventional clothing obviously expressing an individual's worldview (including hippie and later punk attire in the normalisation

period). Citizens responded to the lack of variety and creative sterility of clothing producers by taking fashion into their own hands.

Jeans from Tuzex and a Sweater from an Austrian Aunt

From the 1960s, jeans became a part of Czechoslovak fashion, especially for young people. Finding 'real' jeans in a normal shop in Czechoslovakia at that time was impossible. Imitation jeans began to be made at the end of the 1960s, but real jeans, available for sale only in the 'capitalist' West or in Tuzex stores for so-called *bony* (vouchers), were highly coveted:[29]

> I remember that mum once brought jeans home from Tuzex. I only wore them occasionally, so that I didn't spoil them. I was widely admired for them back then.[30]

To own something from Tuzex meant to set oneself apart. Jeans became a marker of social success:

> Us young people wanted to go about in jeans, and quality ones were only available in Tuzex. So parents had to get 'x' number of vouchers together from time to time so that their kids could buy jeans and not feel like losers walking about among their friends in synthetic trousers.[31]

What was initially at the start of the 1970s an exceptional item of fashion paradoxically became the signature for a veritable 'blue army' of jeans wearers by the 1980s. They were notionally pitted against a 'grey army', a large group of people who only wore what was widely accessible and who usually belonged to the older generation. Besides Tuzex, it was occasionally possible to find fashionable clothes in specialist stores in larger towns, particularly Prague. Those who were not so lucky at home visited neighbouring socialist states in search of such goods:

> We often went to Dresden for clothing or sewing things. Hungary was far away, but I remember that I once bought myself some nice sweaters there. They were soft in comparison to what we had here. Everyone brought T-shirts and sweaters back from Hungary, while they mostly brought back shoes from East Germany.[32]

Those who had a relative or friend in Western Europe had really won the lottery:

Our relatives brought us beautiful clothes from Austria. I remember that my aunt brought some lovely sweaters. Even though she and my uncle were both pensioners, they always got something for us.[33]

Do It Yourself—Home Dressmakers

The lack of fashionable clothes forced people to grapple with the problem themselves. Above all, they had to improvise and learned to sew, knit and crochet unobtainable items for their families. There were even courses teaching these skills, almost exclusively for women. A more common and cheaper way of learning to sew was through transferring experience within the family from generation to generation or through asking advice from expert friends. Home sewing was a phenomenon mentioned as frequently as taking care of one's summer-house in our interviews. Empirical research suggests that at the end of the 1970s, 57 per cent of women sewed and customised clothing themselves.[34] Almost every family owned a sewing machine. Newly-minted dressmakers not only put up with standing in queues, but took out loans for Minerva, Lada or Singer sewing machines. Such equipment cost around 2000 Czechoslovak crowns—around one and a half times the monthly salary at the time.[35] One interviewee has specific memories:

I bought a sewing machine after I gave birth. It cost two thousand….I still have [it] today. And it still works.[36]

Alongside sewing machines, amateur dressmakers also needed patterns and fabric. The selection of fabrics was extremely limited, and so the ideal was to obtain foreign materials. People imported textiles and exchanged them for other items, and they could also be found in Tuzex:

I either got fabrics from my aunt in West Germany or I bought them on the two occasions they let us go to Germany to visit our relatives. From time to time you could find something here, but they were all so colourless, so grey, no bright colours. The colours in Germany were absolutely electrifying. My mother said she couldn't go into the department stores there because her eyes hurt… We weren't used to it. It was awful.[37]

Gertruda Šnajdrová sewed for her family and friends, a frequent phenomenon put to ample use across the country. Dressmakers earned a little for

their work, but they did it above all to bring happiness to those they knew. Gertruda's son, Ota, recalls his mother's art with pride:

> Mum was unbelievably clever. She sewed trousers [and] shirts with long sleeves. As a hippie at the time, you know, I was glad to have billowy shirts, jeans and so on. This didn't make the Bolsheviks happy. She got a lot of ideas from German catalogues that people occasionally brought us like *Quelle* and *Neckermann*.[38]

Dressmakers sought inspiration from domestic magazines like *Vlasta* or *Žena a móda*.[39] But from the 1960s, Western women's publications began to appear sporadically in Czechoslovakia making contemporary fashions more accessible. The West German magazine *Burda* became the most popular. It was, however, what was known as a 'below the counter' product. From 1986, it came out in a more widely circulated Russian mutation. In interviewees' memories, patterns from *Burda* were more modern and better-fitting than those bought at haberdasheries:

> When I wanted to sew and wanted really good patterns, this was made possible by *Burda*, albeit the Russian version. I bought it for the patterns inside.[40]

When it came to shortages, or indeed the greyness, flatness, uniformity and frumpiness of clothing, it was possible at the individual level to alter the unsatisfactory situation, at least in part. This could be done by searching for fashionable garb at Tuzex or through obtaining smuggled or legally imported goods from abroad. Home-sewing represented an active DIY approach. Indeed, we can update this topic through reference to the 2020 coronavirus crisis, during which the Czech Republic was one of only a few countries that dealt with a shortage of facemasks by making them at home. Initial research into the pandemic shows that a creaky old sewing machine could be found in nearly every family, and that resourceful amateur dressmakers started sewing for their relatives and the wider community just as they did during normalisation. They dusted off their forty-year-old skills and in this new time of scarcity, when the free market had failed, they helped solve an emerging problem. Perhaps as confirmation that the past and its greyness really are history, the resultant handmade facemasks exploded with bright colours and designs.

Grey Prefabricated Blocks of Flats
and Uniform Homes

> For us in [the town of] Most, the 1970s meant the destruction of historic architecture and the arrival of monotone grey prefabricated blocks of flats.[41]

An analysis of narrators' memories, photographs, films and magazines from the period indicates that grey is associated with the crumbling decrepitude of old buildings:

> Not just prefabricated housing but old buildings that hadn't been invested in were grey. The streets and squares of larger towns were grey.[42]

Entire housing estates of panel buildings (on which not just socialist governments relied to solve their housing crises) were erected on green fields or flooded historic town centres. Due to economic pressures in the 1970s, construction of mass estates became the norm, with cost and speed triumphing over all other considerations. The housing estates of the 1970s were equally the offspring of the indecision of the 1960s, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party (KSČ CC) had committed itself to an increase in flat production.[43] After 1970, architects and urban planners were backed into a corner regarding aesthetics. The main social task was to fix the acute housing shortage linked to population growth in Czechoslovakia after the war. Between 1950 and 1971, the population of the Czech part of the federation rose by 800,000.[44] Demographic change led to the construction of 80,000 prefabricated panel buildings in the Czech lands between 1953 and 1991, which housed more than 1.2 million apartments. Over a half were erected in the 1970s.

Criticism of grey prefabricated mass housing reached its peak in the 1980s and focused on the Prague district of Jižní Město, built for 80,000 inhabitants.[45] Jižní Město became a symbol of all that was wrong with residential estates: the uncontrolled number of buildings and individual flats, and the failure to finish construction of entire estates, including infrastructure, until many years after the first inhabitants had moved in.[46] The Czech population was divided over prefabricated houses. On the one hand, there were those who had lived (or still live) in panel homes, and on the other, those who never had and never would. It is especially noteworthy that those who had experience of prefabricated housing were most often the

least harsh in their judgment. Positive memories frequently related to pre-fabricated buildings' modern amenities:

> We got a new flat. It had central heating, a bathroom, everything. We saw this as an enormous step up from the old flat where our old granny had to go to the cellar for coal… To have a flat in a panel house, now that was really something![47]

Negative recollections reflected the anonymity of prefabricated complexes and the alienation of people on housing estates:

> These big buildings were totally anonymous. People knew their neighbours on their own stairway, they said 'hi' at the lift, but you'd only have close contact… with people on your hallway.[48]

It was the same inside the flats:

> Each neighbour knew where your toilet was, where your television and kitchen were. And everything was the same according to the contemporary standards. That included living room walls, carpets, curtains and, above all, the TV. Half of the building had everything exactly the same.[49]

Wooden Decorations, Wire Sculptures of Ferda the Ant and New Wallpaper

People tried to influence their environment as best they could. Entire families threw themselves into home improvement, gardening and tending their summer homes. In this context, an interesting article appeared in 1972:

> The 1970s city dweller does not have it easy. Irritated by smog, imperfect transport and services, the daily loss of their last shreds of certainty caused by news of military coups and unveiled conspiracies, he is looking for an escape, because it is difficult to protect himself. We witness how, at regular intervals, the better-off leave town to take shelter for several days in a country house, others escape to the gardening colony [allotments with huts that can be used as accommodation], while others have succeeded in acquiring at least a corner of a basement or an unoccupied room to do DIY in a free moment.[50]

Those who wanted to make their living spaces distinct had to become craftspeople in their spare time. A specific form of art arose, which used common and widely-accessible materials such as wood, cotton wool, leather and horns. Employing various carving, wire-working, crocheting and macramé techniques, 'original' accessories appeared in otherwise identical flats according to one's taste or lack thereof:

> So in the corridor we had Ferda the Ant [a cartoon character] made of wire, and there was a light bulb instead of his bottom. The children decorated their rooms with crocheted pictures. My husband brought tree trunks back from the forest and then sanded and varnished them and they became original wooden decorations. We had a living room full of them.[51]

Bigger projects requiring a certain amount of technical skill included painting or, as was then fashionable, wallpapering the flat, or walling in the bathroom (otherwise separated with Formica dividers from the rest of the apartment). In these ways, flats could differ from one another:

> We painted the entire flat in a day. It was an undertaking for the whole family! For the most part, we couldn't get our hands on wallpaper. I remember that finding tiles for the bathroom was the biggest problem. We got them through a friend.[52]

As well as providing the possibility to differentiate themselves from others, crafting and DIY allowed practitioners to create something not available on the market and which others did not have. They could thus personalise a uniform environment.

From Grey to Green: Gardens, Summer-Houses and Second Homes

Gardening and tending to a summer-house (*chata*) were other ways to 'escape' from the greyness of the town in the 1970s and 1980s. They made it simultaneously possible to breath in green space, experience a feeling of freedom and leave the rhythm of work behind. Daily activities in the garden or weekly/monthly visits to the country home meant, in many cases, temporarily vacating prefabricated housing estates. Today we evoke the concept of 'escape' or 'flight' to the garden (I use the term 'escape' figuratively myself). But unlike the 1970s article cited above, most of our narrators would not have used the term 'escape' to describe their actions

at the time. If they had, then it would have signified 'escaping from the city' rather than carrying a political meaning. If people were asked in the 1970s or 1980s, they would have said that they were 'leaving' for the summer-house or 'running' to the garden.

Gardening was a cheaper version of tending to a summer-house, but it often required daily work. Gardening colonies frequently consisted of dozens of small parcels of land where most people knew each other. Children played together, while adults swapped gardening advice or lent each other tools. If relations between neighbours became warmer still, then families organised joint celebrations:

> We built a little hut of sorts in the garden and often on summer evenings we'd make a fire and cook sausages with our parents. It was nice.[53]

If a family owned a garden, it often became a hobby or commitment which left little time for other activities, at least in the summer months:

> It was gardening time from spring to autumn. We didn't go anywhere else because the plants had to be watered every evening or because we didn't want to go home.[54]

Besides the preparatory work at the start of spring, and indeed getting the garden ready for winter before the first frosts arrived, gardeners enjoyed relaxation and the harvesting of their fruits:

> It felt really good. In the summer we picked what the garden produced. We sometimes made a fire and sat around it. My husband played a harmonica, we sang and we grilled sausages.[55]

Gardening improved the life quality of all those for whom it was a hobby. After all, time spent in green spaces has had positive effects on the human psyche since time immemorial. Small-scale gardeners could manage their own 'micro-farm', growing fruits and vegetables that were hard to find in the shops.[56] But more than a source of high-quality vegetables, gardening was a matter of recreation and rest for the mind. Not everyone was able to secure a summer-house or country home, and so a small garden, usually on the outskirts of town, was at least a partial substitute.

The rise in living standards, the motorisation of society, the shortening of the working week and higher social status facilitated the acquisition of

summer-houses.[57] This resulted in a phenomenon which, while not new, became more visible. It is interesting that both the communist regime and some dissidents criticised the habit of going to the *chata*; the former complained that people were working fewer hours and did not engage in public life, while the latter similarly pointed out that citizens had withdrawn into their own private shells. All the same, both sets of critics thoroughly enjoyed themselves in the privacy of their own country homes.

For many, a stay at the *chata*, like gardening, represented a possibility to switch off from the bustle of the town and fulfilled a longing for nature. The goal of self-realisation, more free time and the limitations placed on foreign travel all raised interest in summer-houses. The biggest advantage of having a country abode was, and continues to be, the wide range of activities there, stretching from DIY to gardening, mushroom hunting and sport.[58] Summer-houses were often understood less as holiday accommodation and more as second homes:

> We got an old country house in Vrchlabí. It was a pleasure. My husband was terribly clever and so he reconstructed it….We did it all ourselves. Pavel made a beautiful fireplace—goodness, it was stunning… We felt pretty good there.[59]

After 1989, predictions that gardening and *chata*-owning would become dead symbols of socialism proved empty. On the contrary, these specific and highly-dynamic phenomena survived different political systems. People do not, *a priori*, seek shelter from a political regime in their second homes (although this was not, and is not, excluded); more often 'fatigue' with the city and modern technology, a longing for nature and a search for balance drive people to keep summer-houses. When in 2008 the TV programme *Retro* asked whether gardening and country homes had a future in the Czech Republic, almost 90 per cent of respondents said they found it a wonderful way to spend their free time.[60] And as with amateur dressmakers, here too we can bring this topic up to date: during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020–2021, many Czechs feared for their health and sought 'escape' in the privacy of their summer-houses.

A Grey Climate: Ash and Smog

A lunar landscape, chimneys belching smoke, falling ash, the stench of burning coal, the land shrouded in mist and low-lying cloud, the sun visible at most for sixty days a year and an environment reminiscent of science fiction unfortunately describes the appearance of the North Bohemian Brown Coal Basin, and parts of the Ostrava and Sokolov regions, in the 1980s. Prague too suffered from smog predominantly in the autumn. During forty years of communist rule, serious cracks emerged in the promised land of milk and honey. To be sure, it should be noted that communism was not solely to blame; this period marked the highpoint of 'scientific-technical progress', in whose name a range of devastating interventions into nature were made. States on the other side of the Iron Curtain were also dealing with ecological problems. Czechoslovakia's specific disadvantage was the country's geography: in a basin surrounded by hills and forests which impeded the free flow of air. The striking environmental issues of the 1970s came to a head in the following decade. According to data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Czechoslovakia had the third highest rate of sulphur dioxide in Europe. Inhabitants of the Krušné hory region in north-western Bohemia, where the daily concentration of sulphur dioxide was thirteen times higher than permitted norms, were exposed to toxic smog for up to eighty days a year. Land inside the so-called 'Black Triangle' (spanning parts of Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland) ranked among the worst in the country in 1983. Probably 20 per cent of Czechoslovakia's total area of forest was damaged at that time. It was estimated that around 28 per cent of the population (around four million people) lived in districts where the atmosphere was polluted. The expected lifespan of an inhabitant of these most polluted regions was two to four years below the average.[61]

> I remember when they lowered the norms for falling ash by 2,000 tonnes per square kilometre in 1980, and that was crazy. I lived there and I couldn't even go into the forest, because you brushed a branch and got covered in black. When you travelled around Vítkovice, everything was grey, no matter if it were a tree, a building, a road, just about everything was grey from this dust.[62]

The shortage of fashionable clothes was solvable: people sewed things for themselves or shopped in Tuzex. The grey environment of housing estates

could ultimately be left behind, if the family pooled together to obtain a garden or summer-house—or at least they could breathe the fresh air at a friend's house. But there was no escape from the ecological consequences of the socialist experiment with its mania for heavy industry and 'philosophy of iron'. The regime initially tried to bribe inhabitants of the regions worst affected. From 1 January 1982, people from the North Bohemian Basin who had lived in the area for at least ten years received a so-called 'annual stabilisation' payment of 2000 Czechoslovak crowns per person. Local inhabitants acerbically called this 'burial money'.[63]

> The only measure was to pay people money… To this day I say that miners are the stupidest bunch, because it suffices to pay for their beer. Add a few crowns and they'll dismiss it all, agree to whatever, and then go along with it like sheep. Miners, but not just miners, were delighted by how the government was on their side.[64]

When even such 'preferential treatment' failed to stop the flow of migration, and northern Bohemia started to lose its university-educated population in particular, the regime took administrative measures. First and foremost, doctors, teachers and technical specialists were targeted (all of whom possessed information about pollutants in the atmosphere, which was otherwise largely secret at the time). A nurse who worked in Teplice hospital's paediatric department recalls:

> It was awful to see asthmatic children with red eyes in the hospital every day. We always gave them antibiotics and vitamins and sent them to sanatoria. We recommended to their parents that they should move out of the area. And I remember that the worst thing was how desperate mothers explained to us that they had been trying for years, but that they couldn't find work or a flat outside of the region.[65]

Central and regional communist authorities used both carrot and stick. After the stabilisation payments they reached for the figurative stick. First covertly, and then by decree, they stopped members of the aforementioned professions from leaving the region. Hence, 'stabilisation measures' from the early 1980s can be considered a modern form of serfdom. Citizens were prohibited from freely abandoning a blighted area and were not permitted to acquire a flat or work outside of the region.[66] People in existentially threatened lands were left with nothing else but to start

organising conservationist environmentalist schemes. Cleaning forests and rivers was no longer enough, and even if both constituted exemplary behaviour, such activities seemed absurd with respect to the scale of the problem. With a stroke of the pen, the powerful secretary of the KSČ CC could expand coal mining, make an exception for a missing water purification system or sign off on the wrong chimney filter.

This was not symbolic greyness, but an existential threat to the lives of people in the localities affected. It mobilised citizens who, from signing various petitions, came to engage in open protest. In May 1989, an organisation called 'Prague Mothers' went on a march. Their association raised awareness of air pollution in Prague and directed its appeal to a meeting of the Austrian and West German environment ministers concurrently taking place in the capital:

> We wanted to stay in the background and be as inconspicuous as possible. For us, it was about the environment. But because we decided to protest openly and direct our message to the meeting of environmental ministers, we did consciously position ourselves at a political level.[67]

In the two years before 1989, the regime's 'disciplinary forces' rose up against young environmentalists who fought to preserve Stromovka park in Prague, part of which was going to be engulfed in a planned motorway bypass.[68] Stromovka was the first appearance of a little-seen phenomenon: an official organisation (Brontosaurus, a conservation body) linking up with independent initiatives (for example, *České děti*—'Czech children').

One week before the Velvet Revolution on 17 November 1989, the inhabitants of Teplice in northern Bohemia repeatedly came out onto the streets of their town. Plagued by toxic low-lying cloud containing more than fifteen times the permitted level of chemicals, they asked for that most obvious thing required for life—clean air. The 3000 demonstrators represented the biggest turnout anywhere outside of the capital city.[69] They did so without any cooperation with the dissident movement. One of the main spokespersons of ecological dissent and a signatory of Charter 77, Ivan Dejmal, admitted that oppositionists underestimated the environmental situation, in particular in northern Bohemia and around Ostrava, and this despite issuing a number of declarations about ecology:

> Environmental problems were plain to see and, therefore, citizens affected could chastise the government for them. In this way they became a substitute

set of dilemmas, to which the public, and not the dissidents, lent political subtext.[70]

Other members of independent initiatives also acknowledged that they underplayed the ecological card in northern Bohemia and Ostrava, adding that Charter 77 activists first appeared in Teplice on 20 November, one week after the protests began there, and some three days after the start of the Velvet Revolution in Prague.[71]

The activities of official ecological bodies, conservationists and a portion of the public did not develop into direct political opposition, even in 1989. But civic activism was impossible to ignore. When advocating ecological protection, citizens could skirt the border of the permitted without much fear. Defence of the environment could also be, for many, a surrogate issue, a safety valve, allowing them to define themselves against the local apparatus, indeed against the communist government. According to Article Four of the Constitution, the KSČ, as the leading force in the country, held the unprecedented state of nature, the toxic air and the stinking rivers within its jurisdiction. Such fledgling civic action, often outside of Prague, was enormously important symbolically because it became a precursor to political activism.[72]

Conclusion

Every oral history research project raises a whole new set of questions. One that we have sought to answer is why narrators mention the colour grey in their life stories, and what it means to them when they do so. It is not too far from the truth to accept that many invoke grey in predefined, often stereotypical, images today to signal their disagreement with the normalisation regime; indeed to distance themselves from it (influenced by former dissidents' contributions to debates about the past in the 1990s). From the point of view of mental hygiene, this is comprehensible. What continues to be difficult to understand, however, is why people, when talking about the 'grey' regime, 'admit' in the same breath that they were in no way heroic, which perhaps suggests they were personally able to get along just fine.

The formerly unprivileged citizens of Czechoslovakia have been caught in a trap set for them by other 'judges of history'. Today, these arbiters persuade the public that political activism is 'highbrow', while realising oneself in one's family, with friends, in the community, in work, in sport is

'lowbrow'—that without political activism it is impossible to live a meaningful life. But narrators have no reason to perceive their lives during normalisation as boring, grey or lowbrow; it would be against the nature of their lived experiences.

The obligation to reflect on one's life and morals and to search for 'opportunists', like the shrouding of society in grey, are 'achievements' of the post-revolutionary era, indicating an imaginary or strongly felt affiliation with the anti-regime victors. This denies a certain rationality to people's behaviour, it nullifies their alignment with other values, and finally it erases the fact that people could have an ambivalent relationship to different manifestations of the regime. Furthermore, this relationship could alter based on how the individual and society changed over time.[73] In one moment, an individual could be extremely opportunistic, at another, 'oppositional', possibly even unconsciously and without planning to be so. Both stances could be accompanied by many doubts and internal dilemmas. What is almost certainly the case, however, is that much of the population did not think in such categories during this 'grey period'.

Today, too, we live through history; it did not 'end' with the fall of the *ancien régime*, although many alongside Francis Fukuyama believed this to be so at the start of the 1990s. Maybe once again, this time as citizens of a free state, we are witness to a historic conjuncture connected to global warming, migration and the COVID-19 pandemic. We might not notice this rupture, as it may not, for many, be as obvious as 1989. But in the study of history the same rules apply: like my own and older generations, today's thirty-somethings and forty-somethings will face questions from their children, who will ask 'what did you do when you had the chance to improve the climate, defend Palestine or people of colour, fight for the rights of same-sex couples?' Without being overly predictive, I am certain that one response might be 'we went to work, we lived our own lives and, in our private lives, things were fine. We were comfortable and we dealt with other issues'. Because the contemporary Czech regime is democratic, this answer does not necessarily constitute such a future 'offence' as the behaviour of past generations in the 1970s and 1980s. But the principle remains the same.

Notes

1. Student assignment, April 2020, author's private archive.
2. Student assignment, April 2020, author's private archive.

3. This student project took place between 1 September 2019 and 8 May 2020. Fifty Masters students of Oral History and Contemporary History at Charles University's Faculty of Humanities took part. The group was approximately 50 per cent male, 50 per cent female, and the age range spanned from 24 to 57 years old. Thirty-nine of the students were born after 1989. Only two men and one woman were older than 50.

4. M. Vaněk and P. Mücke, *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society* (New York, 2016); M. Vaněk (ed.), *Obyčejní lidé…?! Pohled do života tzv. mlčící většiny. Životopisná vyprávění příslušníků dělnických profesí a inteligence* (Prague, 2009); M. Vaněk and L. Krátká (eds), *Příběhy (ne) obyčejných profesí: Česká společnost v období tzv. normalizace a transformace* (Prague, 2014); M. Vaněk et al., *Sto studentských evolucí: Vysokoškolští studenti roku 1989. Životopisná vyprávění v časosběrné perspektivě* (Prague, 2019).

5. M. Otáhal, *Opozice, moc a společnost 1969–1989: Příspěvek k dějinám 'normalizace'* (Prague, 1994), pp. 32–3.

6. M. Otáhal, *Normalizace 1969–1989: Příspěvek ke stavu bádání* (Prague, 2002), p. 30.

7. Vaněk and Mücke, *Velvet Revolutions*, p. 219

8. M. Sabrow, 'Socialismus jako myšlenkový svět: Komunistická diktatura v kulturně historické perspektive', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2012), pp. 196–208 (here p. 199).

9. Many narrators find it easier to espouse the dominant values of contemporary memory discourse, which are undoubtedly perceived to be morally superior. After all, these attributes led to the tumbling of the old regime and opened up the path to the free market and democracy. Signing up to these moral values and adding a memory of 'resistance' of one's own, albeit *ex post facto*, is considered by many to constitute a way of coming to terms with the past.

10. L. Marková, 'Plzeňská hudební scéna v letech 1968–1986', Diploma thesis, Charles University, Prague, Faculty of Humanities, 2015, p. 15. This thesis is available at https://is.cuni.cz/studium/dipl_uc/index.php?id=caf7d1f9c8b29ceb14668281c35b4d58&tid=1&do=xdownload&fid=120191732&did=151855&vdetailu=1 (last accessed 2 August 2021).

11. M. Pastoureau, *Modrá. Dějiny jedné barvy* (Prague, 2013).

12. L. Eiseman and R. Hickey, *Colors for Your Every Mood* (Sterling, VA, 1998), pp. 128–33.

13. V. Havel, 'Dear Dr. Husák', translated by Paul Wilson, in V. Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Writings 1965–1990* (New York, 1991), p. 73.

14. Otáhal, *Normalizace*, p. 5.

15. Interview led by Michaela Appeltová, 2007, Centre of Oral History ÚSD AV ČR digital collections (hereafter COH ÚSD AV ČR).

16. Interview led by Hana Pelikánová, 2006, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
17. J. Šiklová, 'The "Gray Zone" and the Future of Dissent in Czechoslovakia', *Social Research*, vol. 57, no. 2 (1990), pp. 347–63 (here pp. 352–4).
18. Interview led by Lucia Seglová, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
19. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 1992, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
20. L. Valeš, *Listopad ´89 v Klatovech* (Klatovy, 2005), pp. 15–17.
21. M. Vaněk, *Ostrůvky svobody. Kulturní a občanské aktivity mladé generace v 80. letech v Československu* (Prague, 2002).
22. See also M. Vaněk, *Byl to jenom rock´n´roll? Hudební alternativa v komunistickém Československu 1956–1989* (Prague, 2010).
23. Interview led by Jiří Petráš, 1997, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
24. P. Houda, *Normalizační festival: Socialistické paradoxy a postsocialistické korekce* (Prague, 2019).
25. Ibid., pp. 38–42.
26. K. Hlaváčková, *Móda za železnou oponou: společnost, oděvy a lidé v Československu 1948–1989* (Prague, 2016), p. 35.
27. V. Průcha, *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992 (2. díl, období 1945–1992)* (Brno, 2009), p. 790.
28. M. Krajčíková, 'Specifika normalizační módy v Československu', in P. A. Bílek and B. Činátlová (eds), *Tesilová kavalérie. Popkulturní obrazy normalizace* (Příbram, 2010), p. 135. The tendency towards synthetic materials is possible to understand generally as part of a 'modernisation' trend (which symbolised 'progress') spanning both sides of the Iron Curtain during the Cold War. See J. Pavitt, *Fear and Fashion in the Cold War* (London, 2008), p. 33.
29. Tuzex was a chain of retail outlets that sold foreign goods in exchange for foreign currencies or specially issued vouchers called *bony* in Czech. Czechoslovak crowns were not accepted. The name Tuzex was an acronym of *Tuzemský Export* (domestic export). The shops were used to siphon off foreign currency from the population. Moneychangers exchanged Eastern and Western currency without any license or traded with Tuzex vouchers (*bony*). Vaněk and Mücke, *Velvet Revolutions*, p. 123.
30. Student assignment, April 2020, author's private archive.
31. Interview led by Jana Nosková, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
32. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
33. Interview led by Jana Nosková, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
34. D. Hamplová and P. Horská, 'Stručné poznámky o ideových přístupech k rodině v období socialismu', in A. Marès and P. Horská (eds), *Česko-francouzský dialog o dějinách evropské rodiny* (Prague, 2001), pp. 106–18 (here p. 113).
35. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.

36. Interview led by Eva Brabencová, 2019. Student assignment, author's private archive.
37. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
38. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 2020, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
39. Interview led by Anna Kučerová, 2020. Student assignment, author's private archive.
40. Interview led by Tereza Schambergerová, 2019. Student assignment, author's private archive.
41. Interview led by Zdeněk Doskočil, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
42. Interview led by Zdeněk Doskočil, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
43. L. Zadražilová, *Když se utopie stane skutečností: Panelová sídliště v Československu 1953–1989* (Prague, 2013) pp. 90–2.
44. Data from the Czech Statistical Office: https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/obyvatelstvo_hu (last accessed 2 August 2021).
45. For criticism of prefabricated housing estates from the period, see the film *Panelstory aneb Jak se dělá sídliště* [*Story from a Housing Estate*] dir. Věra Chytilová. Czechoslovakia, 1979.
46. Zadražilová, *Když se utopie stane skutečností*, pp. 112–14.
47. Interview led by Jana Nosková, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
48. Student assignment, April 2020, author's private archive.
49. Ibid.
50. D. Pavlů, *Umělecké kutilství* (Prague, 1973), p. 119, cited in B. Činátlová, 'Invaze barbarů do české kultury', in Bílek and Činátlová (eds), *Tesilová kavalérie*, pp. 154–65 (here p. 157).
51. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
52. Interview led by Petra Jouzová, 2020. Student assignment, author's private archive.
53. Interview led by Blanka Hrušková, 2020. Student assignment, author's private archive.
54. Interview led by Jitka Sobotková, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
55. Student assignment, April 2020, author's private archive.
56. Research among Prague workers shows that 37 per cent of households' eggs, 22 per cent of meat and no less than 73 per cent of fruit and vegetables were at least partially provided by home-growing and home-husbandry (meaning in one's own garden or from relatives). See Hamplová and Horská, 'Stručné poznámky', p. 113.
57. The proportion of Czech households (twelve per cent) owning holiday accommodation is one of the highest in Europe. See I. Bičík, *Druhé bydlení v Česku* (Prague, 2001), p. 31.
58. P. Schindler-Wisten, *O chalupách a lidech: České chalupářství v období tzv. normalizace a transformace* (Prague, 2017), pp. 180–5.
59. Interview led by Alžběta Polzová, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.

60. Schindler-Wisten, *O chalupách a lidech*, pp. 180–5.
61. M. Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat: Ekologie v českých zemích v letech 1968–1989* (Prague, 1996), pp. 61–3.
62. Interview led by Zdeněk Doskočil, 2008, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
63. Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat*, pp. 61–4.
64. Interview led by Jitka Sobotková, 2007, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
65. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 1995. Collection on the Environment, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
66. Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat*, pp. 61–4.
67. Ibid., p. 122.
68. Ibid., pp. 102 and 126.
69. M. Vaněk, 'Předehra k 17. listopadu 1989: Ekologické demonstrace v Teplicích', in O. Tůma (ed.), *Historické studie: k sedmdesátinám Milana Otáhala* (Prague, 1998), pp. 223–32 (here pp. 231–2).
70. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 1995. Collection on the Environment, COH ÚSD AV ČR. See also M. Vaněk, 'O některých problémech ekologického hnutí v českých zemích před rokem 1989', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1995), pp. 42–58 (here p. 46).
71. Interview led by Miroslav Vaněk, 1995. Collection on the Environment, COH ÚSD AV ČR.
72. E. Mandler, *Nebát se a nekrást? Výběr ze statí a článků z let 1995–1998* (Prague, 1998), pp. 114–15.
73. M. Pullmann, 'Sociální dějiny a totalitněhistorické vyprávění', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. 15, no. 3–4 (2008), pp. 703–17 (here pp. 705–6).

Gendering Normalisation: Citizenship in Czechoslovakia During Late Socialism

Celia Donert

171

A 1980s publicity photograph for JZD Agrokombinát Slušovice—featuring a blonde tanned woman in a low-cut white dress, seductively clasping a wicker basket bursting with peppers, cucumbers and other farm produce—might seem an unlikely starting point for an exploration of gender relations during normalisation. Sexualised and vivid, the image is a world away from the posters of heroic female farm workers produced in the 1950s to celebrate the triumphs of agricultural collectivisation.[1] The Slušovice cooperative was known as the 'shop-window' of the socialist economy during the last years of communist rule in Czechoslovakia. Having diversified into computers as well as agricultural technology, Slušovice was celebrated for its success in motivating its workforce by rewarding them for their productivity, for example by allowing workers to purchase Western consumer goods in the cooperative's own 'Tuzex' shops.[2] Could we read this photograph as a gendered vision of a late socialist future that never materialised, or rather as foreshadowing the deluge of sexualised advertising that was to flood public space in Czechoslovakia after the collapse of the communist regime, just a couple of years later? If so, where does the history of gender relations during normalisation stand in relation to the eras that preceded and followed it: the experiments with reforming communism that led up to the Prague Spring, and the post-communist age of what historian Adéla Gjuričová has termed 'naked democracy'?[3]

This chapter analyses normalisation—understood here as both a period and a process—through the lens of gender. Whereas the early years of 'building socialism' witnessed far-reaching state intervention into the private sphere with the aim of revolutionising gender relations within the family, the era of normalisation is typically characterised as one of 'gender-conservative' ideals.[4] Rather than mobilising the masses in the name of revolution, privileging the collective over the individual, the state now encouraged citizens to turn inward to the private sphere. This did not mean that the private sphere was seen as apolitical. The Husák regime, as Paulina Bren has argued, aimed not for the politicisation of the private realm associated with Stalinism, but rather to 'domesticate the public realm': the ideal citizen of late communism was the tireless working mother who embraced traditional gender roles—above all, motherhood—within

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the workplace as well as at home.[5] Family and social policies after the Prague Spring focused on population growth, the protection of the family and a discreet revival of 'positive' and 'negative' eugenic measures in the name of preserving the nation from pollution by 'asocial elements' (often defined in racialised terms to refer to Romani or Vietnamese women). Many of these policies, however, emerged from debates about economic, political and social reform in Czechoslovakia during the 1960s rather than as a direct response to the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968. This raises important questions about the longer-term continuities that shaped gender politics and gender relations in Czechoslovakia before, during and after normalisation.

From the purges of the early 1970s to the era of *perestroika* from the mid-1980s, normalisation was not static, and these conservative gender norms were not experienced in the same way by all Czechoslovak citizens. While historians such as Michal Kopeček have recently drawn attention to the significance of experts and technocrats in reshaping economic and political life in the authoritarian oppressive years of late socialism, historians of everyday life have pointed to the importance of weekend getaways in country cottages, or the peaceful stories for children and adults that were broadcast on Czechoslovak television.[6] Nostalgia for the normalisation period, Martina Winkler has found, is especially pronounced among mothers of the 'Husák children'—a mini-baby boom in the early 1970s. In internet forums devoted to sharing memories of socialism, mothers in particular reminisce about high standards of maternity and infant care, the high quality of products such as prams, toys, or cots, and carefree attitudes to childrearing, exemplified by the practice of leaving the baby in the pram outside when shopping in a supermarket.[7] Dissidents, dropouts, religious activists, rebellious teenagers, migrant workers or people dubbed 'asocial' for their ethnicity or their way of life remember the placid atmosphere of normalisation differently, and in all these cases gender was central in mediating their relationship with the late socialist state.

'Gender', as a term defining relations between women and men, was not used by contemporaries during normalisation; as a field of inquiry, 'gender studies' was first institutionalised after the collapse of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.[8] Yet 'gender' remains a highly politicised category of analysis, particularly in relation to the state socialist period. Many of the debates about 'gender' during state socialism in this period—and since—were shaped by the influence of 'Western feminism', or its perceived absence, in the post-communist Czech and Slovak

republics. Had the enforced emancipation of women through work by the communist regime—as well as the fact that everyone's lives were dominated by the ruling party—destroyed the relevance of feminist ideas for post-communist societies? The dissident sociologist Jiřina Šiklová articulated this ambivalent relationship with 'Western feminism' in an article written for an English-speaking audience in 1997: 'Both genders were oppressed by the political system of the state administration. The communist regime was personified by the omnipotent Communist Party, which had no gender'.[9] Yet at the same time, as this chapter will argue, gender relations in late socialist Czechoslovakia did not simply mirror the conservative political logic of normalisation; gender roles offered a limited but productive space for dissidents, dropouts, and migrants—as well as ordinary citizens—to renegotiate the boundaries between public and private life in the last two decades of communist rule.

The Conservative Gender Revolution of Normalisation?

It is often claimed that the normalisation of socialist rule by the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) in the wake of the Prague Spring was reflected in the introduction of a deeply conservative gender regime. 'Traditional images of women and womanhood (and of men and manhood) dominated cultural representations of gender in late socialism'.[10] Normalisation has been described by the Czech legal scholar Barbara Havelková as the 'era of the family', in which the state conceptualised women primarily as mothers, rather than as citizens and workers. 'The old emancipatory rhetoric, as well as the legal gains of the 1950s, largely persisted, but alongside them gender-conservative regulation and social understandings gained more and more ground'.[11] Whereas in the 1950s the socialist state had stepped in to dismantle the patriarchal authority of the male head of the household, and to make spouses more equal, Havelková argues that state intervention into family life during normalisation was driven by the 'aim of ensuring that children were reared in "unbroken" families'.[12] In this view, women were now seen above all as mothers and only secondarily as citizens and workers.

This conservative approach to gender relations was partly a response to the upheavals of the Prague Spring, when the new reformist leadership of the Czechoslovak Union of Women (ČSSŽ) had tried to open up debates

about sensitive subjects such as wage discrimination against employed women, pensions for older single women and the 'legal and social problems' faced by single mothers, divorced women and widows with children.[13] This included proposals for building homes for single mothers equipped with creches and infant schools, so that women could return to work without being dependent on family and friends. As a 1968 study on working women confirmed, there was space for only ten per cent of children under three years old in creches in Czechoslovakia in 1965, compared to the ninety per cent of children of working mothers who had a place in infant school. In 1967, some 28,000 mothers were unable to find a place in a nursery for their child. The lack of places was a particular challenge for qualified women, since the children of 'socially weaker families' were given preference when allocating creche places. Less than ten per cent of children were attending youth clubs in 1965, and only thirty per cent of three to fourteen-year-olds were eating in school canteens.[14] By November 1968, however, the Central Committee of the ČSSŽ was obliged to retract many of their proposals. Under the new leadership of Gusta Fučíková, the widow of the communist 'martyr' Julius Fučík, who was murdered by the Nazis during the wartime occupation, the ČSSŽ officially retracted all twenty-three documents adopted in August on the grounds that they were 'anti-Marxist, chauvinist, anti-socialist and anti-Soviet'.[15]

The changes in family policy introduced after 1968 were also motivated by attempts to boost a flagging birth rate, as the whole socialist bloc had experienced labour shortages during the 1960s. Socialist countries across Eastern Europe had embraced pro-family measures as the ideological fervour of Stalinism waned in the 1950s, and the same was true of Czechoslovakia. The economic crisis of the early 1960s triggered debates about the dangers of working women, including their perceived reliance on institutionalised childcare, which was increasingly seen as a threat to the psychological and physical health of future generations. Influenced by British scholar-practitioner John Bowlby's theories of maternal attachment, Czech psychologists Langmeier and Matejček published a book called *Children without Love* in 1963, which triggered a public debate about the damage apparently inflicted on children who spent too long separated from their mothers during what was seen as the crucial first three years of life. Previously, a relatively short period of leave had been thought sufficient to address an infant's physical and psychological needs. The decision to increase the length of maternity leave responded in part to

these concerns about the negative impact of institutional care in the first three years of a child's life. The reforms introduced after 1968, therefore, responded to post-Stalinist debates between experts and the public about the role of women as workers and mothers, and the nature of the family in a socialist society.

A powerful symbol of this apparent return to conservative notions of masculinity and femininity was the phenomenon of 'Husák's children'. In the first years of normalisation, Czechoslovakia introduced one of the most lavish pro-natalist programmes in the world.[16] It encompassed a range of policies including direct cash benefits and services such as subsidised day care, school meals, after-school care, tax and rent reductions for families.[17] Paid maternity leave was extended from one year to two years in 1971, and up to three years in 1988 if women were also caring for older children. Families were given special 'newly-wed loans' to help purchase an apartment or house. Motherhood supplements, introduced in 1968, were raised in 1971 and child allowances were also gradually increased.[18] From 1972, families with two or more children received extra support. At the same time, child benefits were tied to school attendance; if parents were not fulfilling their duties, the money was given to the national committee. As Barbara Havelková has observed, these provisions, 'although generous, were gender-conservative. They were available only to mothers and not fathers and thus worked with the assumption that mothers were the (indispensable) caring parent—men and fathers continued to be absent'.[19]

Individual care in the home—supported by lengthy paid maternity leave—replaced collective childcare to some extent during normalisation, thus cementing a conservative division of labour within the family. Collective childcare had been a major flashpoint for debates about gender roles in Czechoslovakia since the early 1960s, as experts, employers and working mothers pushed for alternatives to the models of institutionalised care that had been established in the 1950s. Most controversial, as we have seen, were debates about how best to reconcile care in a child's early life with women's paid employment. Czechoslovakia did not have enough creches to satisfy demand; in 1968, there were only 67,700 creche places for the 640,000 children in the country under the age of three. As a result, grandparents were typically asked to help out with childcare. By the late 1960s this model was coming under strain, since grandmothers themselves were still working, and increased commuting distances made their involvement more difficult. However, the debates about socialised

childcare were far from over, as exemplified by the ongoing experiments with *mikrojesle* throughout the normalisation era.[20] These smaller nurseries were supposed to provide better care for children, as well as giving employers more flexibility in managing their workforces.

To what extent did these pro-natalist measures aimed at women, and the focus on individualised care in the home, also translate into attempts to transform fatherhood in late socialist Czechoslovakia? Many scholars have pointed to a crisis of masculinity in the socialist bloc after 1968, as men were increasingly seen as emasculated by both emancipated women and the paternalism of the welfare dictatorships.[21] The historian Peter Hallama argues that debates about masculinity—and fatherhood in particular—were much less progressive in Czechoslovakia after 1968 than in neighbouring East Germany, where ideas about 'socialist'—meaning emotional and equal—fatherhood emerged to fill the void of official masculinity during the 1970s and 1980s.[22] Nonetheless, the normalised Czechoslovak state differed from other gender-conservative regimes that had explicitly privileged fathers over mothers, perhaps most notoriously in the case of National Socialist family policy in Germany, which as Gisela Bock has argued, 'consisted not of "pronatalism and a cult of motherhood", but of antinatalism and a cult of fatherhood and masculinity'.[23] National Socialist state subsidies for families with children privileged fathers over mothers: husbands and not wives were entitled to marriage loans; family allowances went to fathers rather than mothers; husbands benefited more from tax rebates than wives. These economic rewards were designed to raise the status of men who became fathers, rather than removing the inequalities between fathers and mothers. This was not the case in Czechoslovakia.

Moreover, the normalised Czechoslovak regime continued to emphasise women's emancipation through economic independence, meaning that the 'socialist superwoman' juggling her job, family and voluntary work remained a powerful symbol of good citizenship in late socialism. This is also worth bearing in mind when we consider the social effects of the pro-natalist programmes introduced by the Czechoslovak government. On the one hand, these policies affected the way women planned their lives: during the 1970s, on average, women first gave birth at the age of 21–22, stayed at home longer with their children, and were less likely to return to work between the first and second birth.[24] But it is also important to note that these measures were not solely responsible for the upswing in the birth rate. Another reason was that the post-war

generation was starting to have children. Fathers' salaries were typically insufficient to support an entire family, and thus mothers often returned to work for financial reasons. Similarly, single mothers also had to return to work sooner (and were thus given priority in allocating nursery places) since the maternity leave payment was not sufficient to support a whole household.[25] Moreover, contemporary surveys showed that only about half of women valued the pro-natalist measures; would-be mothers considered housing and how to manage employment alongside childrearing before thinking about financial benefits when deciding at what point in their lives, if at all, to start a family.[26] The normalisation regime's family policy—which probably represented the most significant change in Czechoslovakia's social policy after the Prague Spring—was undoubtedly underpinned by conservative gender norms, but women (and men) did not necessarily respond in the way the state wished.

Gender and the Political Economy of Normalisation

Returning to the blonde woman featured on the JZD Slušovice publicity photograph, which recalled the aesthetics of Western advertising far more than it did socialist realism, we might ask how gender stereotypes were influenced by changes taking place in the economic as well as the political sphere during normalisation. Here it is useful to draw on Michal Kopeček's interpretation of normalisation as an evolution of state socialism not in the direction of neo-Stalinism—which would imply a return to the coercion and ideological rule of the early 1950s—but rather towards a modernising, technocratic authoritarianism with certain totalitarian traits, relying on 'technocratic governance and "soft" technologies of power'.[27] This shift was in some ways particular to the normalisation imposed by the KSČ in the wake of the August 1968 invasion, but it was also connected to the broader evolution of state socialism in the last two decades of communist rule. As scholars of 'global socialism' have shown, this transformation was not confined to the Eastern Bloc.[28] Thus, a study of gender in normalised Czechoslovakia has the potential to illuminate a broader set of questions about gender relations in the authoritarian technocratic period of late global socialism.

That debates about reforming the socialist economy might result in a revival of more conservative gender norms in the workplace was already suggested by the language employed by the new scientific journals devoted to 'management studies' in the late 1960s. A Czechoslovak Institute of

Management had been established in 1965, as discussions about reforming the Czechoslovak economy were picking up pace. New journals were also launched: *Moderní řízení* ('Modern Management') and *Organizace a řízení* ('Organization and Management'). Vítězslav Sommer notes that these journals used gendered language in their portrayal of 'the new socialist manager as an exceptional and strong personality, a great personality, an educated promoter of innovation, and also a competent enterprise leader capable of responding flexibly to market needs and of leading the company to maximum profit'.[29] Aimed at managers and directors of industrial enterprises, the journals also provided lifestyle tips, including 'articles supplying advice on how the manager's wife should behave'. Sommer suggests that 'this literature was significantly gendered—a manager was characterized exclusively as a male professional—and used a wide variety of gender stereotypes'.[30] Although management studies was targeted in the immediate aftermath of the August 1968 invasion, the influence of Gorbachev's *perestroika* in the last years of socialist rule led to a revival of debates about reforming the hierarchical management of socialist enterprises to achieve greater productivity and efficiency. The language of individualisation, in which the ideal manager was presented not just as serving the collective, but as the instigator of new ideas who 'motivated' the workforce, resurfaced in Czechoslovak management studies from the mid-1980s.[31]

The gendered ideal of the 'successful manager' echoed the rise of 'middle-class masculinity' and the 'socialist superwoman' in place of the celebration of 'working-class manliness and emancipated womanhood' typical of Stalinist culture.[32] Central to the gendered normality of normalisation, moreover, was the 'double burden' of paid and domestic work that continued to fall heavily on women, and particularly mothers. In 1975, when the ČSSŽ was proudly celebrating socialism's emancipation of women and achievements in realising women's rights at international events for the UN International Women's Year, the magazine *Vlasta* launched a survey of readers' opinions about 'Households and Time'. An employee of the Economics Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences noted that it would be:

> paradoxical, if we managed to shorten our working day still further thanks to our high productivity in industry, but we then had to devote the time we have saved to unproductive housework. However, it is also important to remember that some domestic work can be relaxing or creative. For example, home improvements, handicrafts, cooking a favourite dish and so on. Of course, this work stops being relaxing if it becomes an obligation.[33]

The gendered division of labour within the home was also recognised in contemporary sociological studies of the 'socialist family' in the 1970s. Workers across the socialist bloc had enjoyed increased leisure time as working hours were reduced from the 1960s, but Marxist sociologists warned that this had resulted in people wanting to spend too much time alone or in the 'intimate sphere of the family' rather than engaging in collective activities.[34] As a result, the family was becoming a place where people could develop individualistic or 'bourgeois' tendencies, rather than creating new socialist citizens.[35] Moreover, women appeared to have less than half the amount of free time enjoyed by men. A 1975 study noted that women spent '25.7% (!)' [sic] of their day on housework and childcare compared to 9.8% for men, and had only '7.7% (!)' [sic] leisure time, compared to 16.1% for men.[36] While rejecting 'bourgeois Western' theories of 'women's two roles' to explain this gendered imbalance of domestic work, Marxist sociologists also pointed out that 'our propaganda does not pay enough attention to this issue'. One problem was that socialism had not succeeded in diminishing the economic importance of the family, while the amount of time that had to be devoted to the household increased the family's importance in a person's life, which one academic referred to as the 'shackles of intimacy'.[37] The sociologist Ivo Možný, who worked in marriage counselling services during normalisation having been removed from his university teaching position after August 1968, argued in a 1983 study of university-educated married couples that since husbands were able to get higher-paying, more prestigious jobs than their wives, the decision to split housework along gendered lines was a rational choice.[38]

The tension between official gender norms and the political economy of late socialism became particularly apparent in the experiences of female 'guest' workers in Czechoslovak enterprises during the era of normalisation. Czechoslovakia—along with other socialist countries—initially set up such programmes to offer training and education to citizens of socialist countries in Africa and Asia in the spirit of socialist internationalism and solidarity. Socialist labour exchanges differentiated themselves from Western European labour migration schemes, such as the 'guest worker' programmes in West Germany. By the 1970s, however, economic efficiency played a much more important role in setting the terms of labour migration to the socialist countries. Consequently, as Alena Alamgir has shown, by the 1980s Vietnamese women workers who became pregnant

found that the Czechoslovak state refused to grant them maternity benefits, instead treating their pregnancy as either a health issue or a disciplinary infringement.[39] The late socialist state had moved away from a single ideal of socialist womanhood in which women were supposed to fulfil the roles of worker, mother and active citizen simultaneously, towards a model in which these roles coincided with different stages of a woman's life-cycle. Therefore the Czechoslovak government refused to grant Vietnamese women the welfare benefits to which Czechoslovak citizens were entitled, on the grounds that their temporary stay in the country was permitted due to their status as workers, not as mothers. By the 1980s, this policy had become indicative of the normalisation regime's move away from a policy of socialist internationalism based on solidarity, to an attitude towards migrant labour based on the principles of market exchange. In this way, the denial of maternity allowances to Vietnamese contract labourers could be seen to prefigure the gendered effects of market reform after the collapse of the normalised Czechoslovak regime in 1989.

By the 1980s, however, labour shortages and 'the economic needs of slowly-collapsing late socialist states' also created opportunities for workers to escape from the care and coercion of the welfare dictatorships, as Ondřej Klípa argues in his study of female Polish textile workers who were sent to Czechoslovakia as part of a labour exchange programme.[40] Such schemes were no longer economically viable for the Polish state in the 1970s, he writes, but ideological commitment to socialist 'friendship' and the inflexibility of the planned economy kept them going. At the same time, the Czechoslovak state was keen to retain its female 'guest' workers. As a result, the young Polish women who travelled to Czechoslovakia gained a certain freedom to escape from conservative gender norms, both those of their rural families in Poland and of the paternalistic male management of the Czech factories to which they were sent. As Libora Oates-Indruchová has contended, the ideological emphasis on the emancipation of women created a space for 'diverse discourses of gender in late state socialism, from an unchallenged and unremarked residual patriarchal discourse to proto-feminist elements and even hesitant attempts at alternatives to both'.[41] The ideal of femininity in late state socialism arguably left women with more room for manoeuvre and resistance than the hegemonic vision of bourgeois heterosexual masculinity promoted by the normalisation regime.

Gender, Sexuality and Eugenics

'Deviance' from the conservative gender norms embraced by the normalisation regime were perceived by experts, officials and many ordinary citizens as a threat to the peace and security offered by the KSČ in the last decades of socialism. Implicit in approaches to 'deviance' was the norm of the 'socialist family', against which such behaviours were measured. A rich scholarship has emerged in recent years that explores how questions of sexuality, including same-sex as well as heterosexual relationships, were managed and disciplined by the normalisation regime, as well as the controversial question of eugenics.[42] This emphasis on the disciplining of gender relations by experts and local agents of the state chimes with Pavel Kolář and Michal Pullmann's interpretation of normalisation as an era when the overt violence of the Stalinist state was replaced by less visible ways of maintaining order. 'Decent' citizens, they write, would simply not have to see the violence meted out against Roma or 'asocials' in 'special schools', against dissidents in prisons, or against religious or non-conformist activists in psychiatric hospitals or other medical institutions.[43] Sexuality, in particular, became central to the party's efforts to safeguard socialist morality by collectivising intimacy in the early 1970s, and thus creating an 'illusion of personal freedom, openness and control over one's private affairs'.[44]

Attempts to shore up the socialist family in the immediate aftermath of the August 1968 invasion were intended partly to encourage Czechoslovak society to forget the turbulence of these troubled years. Marriage counselling was introduced across the country in an effort to reduce the number of marriages that ended in divorce. Marriage was viewed as an important element of family life and measure of social status. The state stepped up efforts to channel 'unacceptable' expressions of sexuality into stable, loving heterosexual marriage. Fears about the anti-social 'hooligan' behaviour of young working-class men were increasingly accompanied by moral panics about the promiscuity of young women, which was judged differently by the state (and society) than that of their male peers.[45] Crimes such as 'parasitism' were flexibly interpreted as a means of disciplining these types of deviant behaviours. These moral panics seem to have intensified in the last years of socialism. Fuelled by fears about the moral decay of socialist society in the age of *perestroika*, as Kateřina Kolářová has suggested, the AIDS epidemic of the mid- to late 1980s and the spectacle of

diseased male bodies became a powerful metaphor for the pathological flaws of late socialism in Czechoslovakia.[46]

The pro-natalist policy of the normalisation regime led to a tightening of abortion regulations in Czechoslovakia in 1973. A 1957 law had legalised abortion under certain conditions, but a woman wishing to terminate a pregnancy had to have her request authorised by a special commission, either on health grounds or for 'other important reasons'. Health, rather than notions of reproductive rights, thus framed state intervention into women's reproductive behaviour in socialist Czechoslovakia.[47] In the normalisation period, the interval between abortions was increased from six to twelve months and married women with one or no children could only be granted an abortion for social reasons on an exceptional basis. Yet as abortion rates started to rise again through the 1970s, experts in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics, psychology, psychiatry and demography started to debate another reform. The practices of the abortion commissions were criticised. A new method of early vacuum extraction was introduced, and a psychological study of 'unwanted' children was published revealing the damage caused to children born out of these pregnancies.[48] In 1987 a new law on the induced termination of pregnancy took effect. This permitted abortions on the written demand of the pregnant woman up to twelve weeks after conception. According to *Vlasta*, over 100,000 abortions were being carried out every year by 1989, whereas only one-quarter of women were using other 'modern methods of contraception'. Six per cent were taking the Pill, and eighteen per cent were using the coil (*nitroděložní telíska*). 'In comparison with developed states this is a negligible amount. For example in the GDR more than 60 per cent of women take the hormonal pill, 64 per cent in Great Britain and the same number in the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries'.[49]

Positive measures to boost the birth rate were accompanied by the development of negative eugenic interventions that sought to restrict the fertility of women who were deemed 'undesirable' or 'asocial'. Romani women who were categorised—on subjective grounds—as 'asocial' were increasingly targeted for these eugenic measures.[50] Much of the research on sterilisation and eugenic policies in socialist Czechoslovakia has focused on the ethnic dimension of these programmes, although it also seems likely that other groups that were deemed 'asocial' (such as alcoholics) or people with disabilities were targeted in similar ways. All of these policies were rooted in much older eugenic debates about the quality as well as the quantity of the population. They were also influenced by more recent

research on genetics. Pre-natal screening (and abortion if defects were identified), notes Dudová, were used to 'improve the genotype of the population' and to minimise the number of children with severe disabilities who might 'negatively impact the statistics on prenatal mortality'.[51]

In the case of Roma, the state employed methods such as information campaigns about contraception by gynaecologists and social workers, monetary incentives to women to undergo sterilisation, access to abortion, sterilisation without a woman's consent and the use of threats or misinformation to secure consent. Dudová maintains that similar eugenic practices were used in pregnancies that might result in the birth of severely disabled children. These measures were justified on the basis of the presumed 'asocial' characteristics of Romani women, such as 'alcoholism, promiscuity, lack of interest in education and work, abuse of the welfare system, poor health'.[52] Demographers, anthropologists, educators, psychologists and social workers justified eugenic practices targeting Romani families who were deemed 'asocial'. Here again, there were continuities with the pre-normalisation era. In the late 1950s, the KSČ had issued a decree on measures aimed at assimilating the 'Gypsy population' which categorised Roma as 'nomadic, semi-nomadic and settled'.[53] By the mid-1960s this had been modified into a scale of so-called 'adaptability'. The 'least adaptable' category was described in language reminiscent of Nazi descriptions of 'asocials'. National committees were expected to classify the Roma living in their districts on the basis of these criteria, which were used to collect statistics not only on the size but on the level of 'integration' of the 'Gypsy' population. These descriptions were also deeply gendered, with the Romani woman presented as responsible for the social integration of her children, and thus of the whole community.[54]

In the early 1970s, the Czechoslovak state adopted an informal policy of offering Romani women deemed 'asocial' a material incentive for undergoing sterilisation. The implementation of this policy, as Věra Sokolová has pointed out, depended on the involvement of social workers, doctors and other local agents of the state.[55] Although the socialist state officially distanced itself from race and racism, the definitions of 'asocial' behaviour used to legitimise the sterilisation of Romani women echoed the racialised language of National Socialism. Racialised language resurfaced in 'scientific' studies of Roma by Czechoslovak anthropologists and pedagogues from the early 1960s, claiming to find psychological and physiological causes of their allegedly 'unadaptable' nature. Central to these studies was an assumption that Romani families were disorderly, and

that Romani women were to blame. In addition to offering cash payments to women willing to undergo sterilisation, social workers and doctors sterilised some Romani women without their consent, often at the same time as performing a caesarean section. Either the women were simply not told what had happened, or they were pressured into signing a consent form that they did not understand. Although this practice seems to have become fairly widespread in the 1970s and 1980s, its roots were much deeper, and continued into the 1990s. To some extent, then, coercive sterilisation was a product of normalisation, but this was far from the only factor.

The language of experts did not, however, reflect the way in which ordinary people negotiated the gender-conservative morals of normalisation in everyday life. As Sokolová has shown in her study of homosexuality in socialist Czechoslovakia, ordinary people were able to forge their own sexual identities in the interstices of the conservative gender norms of the 'socialist family'.[56] Nor did the introduction of 'expertise' always lead in a gender-conservative direction. The offices and institutes of Czechoslovak sexologists, for example, became spaces where their homosexual 'patients' could meet. And although the majority of society broadly supported the state's moral crusade against 'hooliganism', when police targeted their own families, they protested.[57] Many Romani families passed as members of the majority society, or found other ways of escaping the disciplinary apparatus of the state; certainly, Roma were not simply passive victims of scientific and medical experts. The normalised regime's attempt to discipline the population through conservative gender norms cannot be dismissed, but neither can the capacity of Czechoslovak citizens to evade or subvert its strictures.

The Emergence of 'Gender': Dissident Critique or Western Import?

Perhaps ironically, the influence of conservative notions of masculinity and femininity in normalised Czechoslovakia were nowhere as significant as in the dissident movement associated with Charter 77. Moreover, the gendered experiences of dissent not only helped to shape the institutionalisation of gender studies as a discipline in post-communist Czechoslovakia, but—paradoxically—contributed to the widely-held belief that 'gender' was, like 'feminism', a Western import that arrived in the country along with liberal democracy after 1989. This view, reinforced by the introduction of 'gender

mainstreaming' programmes during the EU accession process that started in the 1990s, has proved remarkably durable. Gender 'ideology', although to a lesser extent than in Hungary and Poland, has become a touchstone for resentment about Soviet domination being replaced by the hegemony of 'Brussels'.[58]

Czech sociologist and former dissident, Jiřina Šiklová, was one of the most influential proponents of the idea that 'feminism'—and 'gender' itself—was an import from the West that had no meaning for the democratic opposition in Czechoslovakia before 1989. Šiklová, who had been involved in the reform movement in the KSČ during the Prague Spring, lost her position at Charles University's Faculty of Arts and resigned her party membership after August 1968. During the normalisation era she became a social worker. A signatory of Charter 77, she was also active in smuggling *samizdat* publications between Czechoslovakia and the West. She received a prison sentence for importing illegal literature, which she served between May 1981 and March 1982. In 1991, she established the Prague Gender Studies Centre with support from the Network of East-West Women and the Frauen-Anstiftung e.V., a Hamburg-based foundation linked to the German Green Party. It swiftly became one of the internationally best-known of the newly-founded centres for the study of women and gender in post-communist East Central Europe and the Soviet Union.[59]

In her writing on Czechoslovak dissent in late socialism, Šiklová argued that dissident women 'were clearly not interested in feminism', since the generation to which they belonged were facing different challenges than those confronting their feminist contemporaries in the West.[60] She pointed out that this lack of interest was also reflected in the fact that West European and North American feminists paid little attention to the problems faced by women in the socialist bloc, including their persecution by the state. 'When several women were imprisoned in 1979 for their work in VONS [the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted], for example Dana Němcová, Otta Bednářová, Jarmila Bělíková, it was not possible to find Western European women's organisations to support them'.[61] Šiklová attributed this lack of solidarity to the fact that many Western feminists were left-wing and thus wary of dissident critiques of real existing socialism, or struggling for changes such as state-subsidised childcare that in socialist states had simply been imposed from above—often against women's will. This also extended, she argued, to a lack of contact between Czechoslovak women and women's movements in the

Global South. 'We were not informed about the international conferences or resolutions aimed at women, which were adopted at women's forums abroad'.[62] News of the UN Decade for Women was only reported 'sporadically' in the pages of the official press, such as the party newspaper *Rudé právo* or the official women's magazines, *Vlasta* and *Slovenka*. Female dissidents thus had an ambivalent relationship to feminism, even if they did not express this as directly as Václav Havel, who famously wrote that 'even though the position of [Czechoslovak] women is incomparably worse than in the West, feminism seems simply "dada"'.[63]

Former dissidents such as Šiklová and Kamila Bendová, a mathematician, Catholic and mother of six children who was deeply engaged in dissident circles, retrospectively emphasised the importance of traditional gender roles in dividing up—and maintaining—the work of dissent. Bendová was married to Václav Benda, a Charter 77 signatory who was imprisoned for his work with VONS for four years between 1979 and 1983. Bendová described women's role as dissidents in terms of the traditional division of labour within the family; women carried out childcare and housework, 'supported' the male partner in his intellectual work by providing financially for the family and, in case of his imprisonment, continuing his dissident activities.[64] Šiklová likewise describes women in the opposition movements as dissident 'workers', who performed crucial but largely invisible tasks, in contrast to the public intellectual work performed by men. The feminised work of dissent—such as circulating *samizdat*—was unequivocally a criminal act during normalisation, and the relative anonymity of the women involved meant that it was less easy to garner popular support in case they were discovered. This 'invisibility' was used by women to enable them to combine the work of dissent with childcare and domestic labour: women distributed *samizdat* texts when queuing in front of supermarkets, when picking up from the creche or looking after each other's children, or during weekend stays in the country, when there was less chance of surveillance by the secret police, the StB.[65]

Had women in Charter 77 or other opposition groups wished to raise the question of women's status under socialism, Šiklová asserted, they could have done so. They represented a third of the Charter spokespeople and made a greater contribution to typing out and circulating *samizdat* than men. Women were also just as active as men in groups such as *Hnutí za občanskou svobodu* (the Civil Liberties Movement), *Demokratická iniciativa* (Democratic Initiative), *Ekologická společnost* (the Ecological Society), or the *Československý helsinský výbor* (Czechoslovak Helsinki

Committee). She suggests that their unwillingness to articulate the problems faced by women cannot be explained by an inability to express their opinions, but rather a decision to support the universal imperative of collective human rights over the particular interests of certain groups.[66]

But was 'gender studies' simply a Western import after 1989? Oates-Indruchová argues persuasively that texts about gender produced in the early 1990s by leading scholars such as Šiklová, Hana Havelková, Jitka Malečková and Jiřina Šmejkalová-Strickland resulted not from an imported Western feminism, but rather from a tradition of 'gender critique' that had been developing throughout the state socialist era. The notion that feminism was 'imported' stemmed from the perception that Western feminists failed to appreciate the extent to which both men and women were oppressed by the socialist state—including through its mission to 'emancipate' women by obliging them to work for wages. For the pioneers of gender studies in post-communist Czechoslovakia, such as Šiklová, Havelková and the sociologist Marie Čermáková, it was the family—rather than notions of gender identity or difference—that became a site of resistance and solidarity.[67] The diminished authority of men in the public sphere increased the significance of private life and the family, in which women continued to shape the 'compensatory functions of the family and its entire lifestyle'.[68] Just as conservative gender ideals of the family had been instrumentalised by women active in dissident circles during normalisation, so were traditional gender roles within the family remembered in the early years of post-communism as an idealised space of resistance against the socialist state, contributing to a deep-rooted rejection of Western 'ideologies' of feminism and gender.

Conclusion

The conservative gender norms sanctioned by the normalisation regime in Czechoslovakia after 1968 supported a paternalist family policy designed to boost a stagnant birth rate while keeping women in paid employment, a pattern that was similar to many other socialist countries in the last two decades of communist rule.[69] A system of lengthy paid maternity leaves, cash incentives for larger families, and subsidised services was supposed to encourage women to plan their lives in terms of a sequence of study, marriage and childbirth, and paid work. These policies were only aimed at the 'right kind' of women. Ethnic minorities, especially Romani and Vietnamese women, people suspected of having genetic conditions, or

being 'asocial' were subjected to a range of eugenic measures aimed at controlling the fertility of groups deemed 'undesirable'. Perceptions of undesirability and deviance were not only the preserve of experts and officials; they were also shared by many ordinary citizens, and, importantly, this confluence between the aims of the state and the majority of society was one source of the regime's stability until the very last years of communist rule.

Yet the introduction of a conservative gender order should not be equated unproblematically with the gendered realities of social life in normalised Czechoslovakia, and here many Czech feminist scholars have pointed out that the Husák regime's continued adherence to notions of women's emancipation through paid work and motherhood paradoxically opened up a greater range of possibilities for women to respond to the repressive authoritarianism of late socialism. In the early 1990s, Šiklová claimed that women living under socialism had been fortunate in never letting themselves be 'manipulated' to the same extent as men:

> Women took refuge in their 'double burden', in motherhood and in care for small children. The former power elite deemed such activities to be acceptable excuses for not joining the party or accepting a party function. As a result, today women are nowhere near as compromised by having collaborated with the previous regime as are men. Fewer women party members meant not only fewer women functionaries, but also fewer women informers for the secret police.[70]

Where did this leave men? In his analysis of patriarchy under socialism, Ivan Vodochodský observes that men who took over the position of party functionaries 'had power, but lacked authority'. No-one would take them as a model to emulate. Nor was the image of an ordinary man within the family or at work much better; they were described as weak, indecisive, impractical. By nationalising private property, had socialism robbed them of a crucial source of domination and self-confidence?[71] Late socialist masculinity, Vodochodský suggests, was characterised by a certain passivity, manifested in indifference to women's 'double burden' or the discrimination they faced in the labour market, lower salaries, or leadership positions. Understanding this 'passive' dominant masculinity must be crucial to understanding prevailing gender relations within socialist society, an observation that is true not just for the normalisation era, but for the periods that preceded and followed it. As Adéla Gjuričová has noted, the

introduction of democracy and a market economy after 1989 was accompanied by a pervasive eroticisation of public space in post-communist Czechoslovakia.[72] Taking our cue from scholars of the 'long 1989'—who emphasise the technocratic and expert discourses of normalisation that paved the way for the neo-liberal experiment of the 1990s—we should look for the longer continuities in gender norms in socialist and post-socialist Czechoslovakia.

Notes

1. Photograph taken by Jan Regal. Published with the kind permission of DACS.
2. On Slušovice, see also Vítězslav Sommer's chapter in this volume.
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13. National Archives of the Czech Republic, Prague (henceforth NA), f. ÚV ČSSŽ, kart 37, 'Návrh akčního programu Čs. Svazu žen'.

14. B. Svorenová-Kiralyová, *Žena 20. století ve světě práce* (Prague, 1968).

15. NA, f. ÚV ČSSŽ, kart 20, 'Usnesení ČSSŽ, schváleno na plenárním zasedání ÚV ČSSŽ dne 26. listopadu 1968'.

16. Havelková, 'The Three Stages'.

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19. Ibid., pp. 47–8.

20. 'Jesle nebo mikrojesle?', *Vlasta*, vol. 29, no. 22, 28 May 1975, p. 19.

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Shaping 'Real Socialism': The Normalised Conception of Culture

Jan Mervart

From the perspective of cultural and intellectual history, the 1970s and 1980s are often regarded as a period when the free-thinking ideals of the previous decade were progressively extinguished.[1] In the case of Czechoslovakia, these decades are often spoken of as a fundamental watershed, when the 'golden age' of the sixties was crushed under the tracks of Warsaw Pact tanks. Observers at the time even interpreted the subsequent purges in the intellectual realm as a 'Biafra of the Spirit'.[2] In other words, freedom was replaced by unfreedom, the light of 'socialism with a human face' was smothered by the shroud of normalisation. In this chapter, I do

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195

not wish to entirely overturn this evaluation, but rather to affect a certain rotation of viewpoint. Although I accept that the normalisation period was essentially an intellectually shallow maintenance of the socio-political status quo, I attempt to take the rhetoric of the time seriously and trace what Czechoslovak normalisation actually meant to those who elaborated and enforced it. On the basis of contemporary documents, I reconstruct the conceptualisation and practice of cultural policy and culture during the 1970s and 1980s. I believe that such an inquiry can help us clarify the seminal points of departure and contours of the regime that referred to itself as 'real existing' or 'developed' socialism.[3]

Since official cultural policy in the 1970s overwhelmingly rejected earlier conceptions of cultural management, I begin with a summary of post-Stalinist cultural policy in the 1960s and reform communist theories from the brief Prague Spring of 1968. I follow this with a delineation of the legitimisation strategy of the normalised regime, which trumpeted the 'restoration of order' after the 'chaos' of the reform era. I argue that this consolidation was achieved not only by a one-off purge, but also by a continual focus on the counter-revolutionary threat of 1968 from which there sprung a certain inconsistency of cultural policy practice. In the main body of the text, I examine the principal goal of normalisation culture: the moulding of the new 'Socialist Person'. Using selected terms such as 'proletarian internationalism', 'party-mindedness' (*stranickost*, or in Russian *partiinost*), 'democratism' and 'socialist character', I highlight the content of normalisation culture, which on the one hand defined itself against the past and on the other was intended to shape the present and future. By way of conclusion, I return briefly to the question: what does the normalisation concept of cultural policy and culture actually tell us about the final twenty years of Czechoslovak state socialism? At the same time, I assess the extent to which normalised cultural policy can be considered a success. I use the term 'culture' above all in the sense of artistic production, and although several of the definitions described here had a general application, I do not focus on culture in the full breadth of its meaning. In particular, I intentionally leave aside discussion of architecture, leisure time, family structures and lifestyle.[4]

Post-Stalinist and Reform Communist Cultural Policy

Post-Stalinist cultural policy, despite the unprecedented scope that it afforded Czechoslovak culture in the 1960s, was distinguished by internal inconsistencies. On the one hand, party representatives called for aesthetic diversity and the transgression of the schematic character of socialist realism, while on the other they demanded that art actively engage in the party-led construction of socialism.[5] Cultural policy in the 1960s urged greater activism and promised an expansion of artistic space within the framework of building socialism, but in practice constantly endeavoured to flatten out deviations from the socialist norm. Despite the post-Stalinist fashion for debate and the overcoming of the 'cult of personality', the party had no intention of surrendering its role as the chief arbiter, judging what did and did not constitute socialist, or party-aligned, culture. The result was that regardless of the international successes of Czechoslovak culture in the period 1963–1967, notably the 'New Wave' in cinematography, constant disputes over the interpretation of cultural policy were waged between the party intelligentsia and the party leadership. The former conceived the realisation of this policy as a self-governing operation beyond the limitations of censorship, while the latter viewed it as a paternalist oversight of socialist culture by elite party bodies. As such, the 1960s were not merely a 'golden age' of Czech and Slovak culture, but were also laced with pronounced ideological campaigns designed to enforce clear parameters on the 'socialist' nature of art.

The main dilemma was that the ideologues of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) insisted on the supremacy of the party apparatus while viewing artists as partners to be guided on the 'right path' of the party line (in contrast with Stalinism and normalisation, which sought to engineer, exclude and, in the former case, liquidate).[6] However, the cultural intelligentsia, who had contributed in no small measure to the building of Stalinist society, wished to decide for themselves what did and did not constitute socialism. In the reform communist conception it was indeed art, and not the party, that should arbitrate the 'critical perception of reality' and thereby assist the implementation of socialism. The path to the desired form of socialism should lead precisely through the autonomous status of culture, which on the one hand was emancipated from political pressures and on the other could mediate politics through permanent critical reflection.

The relationship of the party leadership to the artistic and intellectual elites and cultural policy changed fundamentally after the accession of Alexander Dubček as head of the KSČ in January 1968. The chief reformers around the new party leader wished to utilise the critical potential of the cultural intelligentsia, partially in order to push through the reform programme and partially in an advisory capacity, on the basis of which new party cultural strategies would be formulated. The first initiative appeared at the beginning of April 1968 in the KSČ's reformist Action Programme. It was based above all on two principles. First, the party apparatus was no longer to be the supreme 'controlling' body, and second, the leading role of the KSČ was instead to be manifested in a more accommodating relationship: bureaucratic methods of managing culture were to be replaced with democratic discussion between party functionaries and the cultural intelligentsia. The title of the relevant passage of the Action Programme, 'The Humanist Mission of Culture', indicated that this would not simply be a cosmetic modification of the previous state of affairs. In the spirit of a Marxist turn towards humanism, culture would now promote the advancement of democracy and freedom, just as it would the human individual and his or her social relations. Its original political and ideological purpose was redefined in the direction of 'universal cultural and aesthetic functions', with the aim of accomplishing a creative, free transformation of humanity and the world in which we live. The cultural community and its institutions were furthermore to enjoy full autonomy and self-governance. This was in line with the reformist concept of the party, which held that communist intellectuals were 'capable of responsibly and independently co-creating and implementing party policy' directed towards the development of humanistic and democratic socialism.[7]

The Purge and the Long Shadow of 68

Following the Warsaw Pact invasion in August 1968, the normalisation-era interpretation of the 1960s was built on two mutually interconnected propositions. First, reform cultural policy had disrupted Leninist political unity, leading to a 'counter-revolutionary' collapse of party control over culture. Second, this discourse of 'counter-revolution' was based on a narrative of hostile 'right-wing forces', who as a result of a lack of party supervision had taken power in Czechoslovakia in 1968.[8] This view was propagated by both Gustáv Husák, Dubček's replacement as First Secretary of the KSČ in April 1969, and by the core normalisation document ratified

in December 1970, entitled *Lessons from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society.* Nevertheless, its main thrust was not aimed at the cultural intelligentsia, but more generally against the pro-Dubčekite 'right-wing forces' within the KSČ, the so-called 'second party centre', of which the cultural elite was considered an important part.[9]

This evaluation of the 1960s and the Prague Spring closely followed the Soviet interpretation of events. 1968 in Czechoslovakia contributed to a definitive change in the internal political landscape of the USSR, culminating in a transformation of cultural policy. On the one hand, between 1964 and 1968 efforts were made to tighten cultural and ideological relations—a symbol of this tendency was the trial of the writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel in Moscow in February 1966. On the other hand, loyal party intellectuals were still granted relatively broad scope during the initial years of Brezhnev's rule. However, fears of the 'counter-revolutionary' Prague Spring provided conservative-minded functionaries in the Soviet party apparatus with sufficient ammunition against any cultural practice that could be construed as politically subversive. With this aim in mind, a campaign was launched against 'modernism' at the congress of the Artists' Union in December 1969, which de facto meant the end of any public deviation from official norms. And this was by no means a short-lived offensive. At the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1971, Brezhnev no longer spoke of a 'sharpening of the ideological battle' between the Eastern and Western blocs, but of an 'ideological war'.[10]

In line with the Soviet model, the Czechoslovak perspective was adumbrated in an important speech delivered by party leader Husák at the Central Committee plenum in May 1970. In addition to providing a fundamental outline of the new policy of normalisation, Husák spoke explicitly about the cultural intelligentsia. He warned that if cultural actors regarded normalisation as an attack on the freedom of culture, science and art, then they must 'be aware of the risk of the political struggle' which they had consciously entered into, thereby coming into 'conflict with the political line of our party'.[11] The cultural intelligentsia was thus effectively designated as the political opposition. Mindful of the 'exceptionally important role of the intelligentsia in modern society', the party sought a 'separation of the wheat from the chaff'; that is, the recruitment of collaborators for the 'restoration of order' programme and a merciless battle against any sign of reformist cultural policy.[12]

Although at the beginning of the 1970s it appeared that a return to a 'normal' state of affairs would not exclude Hungarian leader János Kádár's conciliatory approach in the sense of 'whoever isn't against us is with us',[13] the shaping of normalisation policy went hand in hand with the launch of a series of personnel and institutional changes. In this process, the concept of a sharp 'purge' soon predominated over conciliation. By the end of November 1970, the production or distribution of 118 book titles, twenty Czech feature films and forty-one short films had been halted. The same fate befell a series of record titles, while the vast majority of politico-cultural journals were banned. Wide-ranging personnel changes were introduced in theatres, publishing, cinematography and the music industry. In the book trade alone, seven out of ten directors of publishing houses were replaced, as well as half of the bosses of a further twenty-eight publishers.[14] At the turn of 1970–1971, there was a definitive consolidation of the artistic and creative unions.[15] The model for the normalisation of cultural policy reflected the broader nationwide process. First, on the basis of party resolutions, key personnel changes were implemented in the party apparatus and state bodies, and attention was subsequently shifted to the regimentation of theatres, galleries, the film and recording industries and artistic unions. Ultimately, the network of cultural institutions and organisations was reassembled, forming the normalisation system of 'real socialist' cultural policy. A baleful consequence was that many artists and intellectuals went into internal exile (for example, the philosopher Karel Kosík), or into foreign exile, as was the case with Eduard Goldstücker, Pavel Kohout and Milan Kundera. Others joined the ranks of the 'alternative' or 'parallel' culture, which emerged as a counterweight to official party-sponsored culture.[16]

The establishment of 'normalised' institutions was accompanied by a radical break with the policies and theories of the reform communist era. For example, the resolutions adopted by artistic union congresses in 1972 without exception critically analysed the past in line with the strictures of the canonistic *Lessons from the Crisis Development*. The years 1968–1969, so it was argued, had seen a 'destruction of fundamental intellectual and aesthetic values', towards which inconsistent party policies had been leading since the beginning of the 1960s. The nadir was reached in the subversive activities of the reform politicians of 1968. The common denominator of these critiques was their emphasis on the deviation from the socialist function of art and the attendant inclination towards 'bourgeois subjectivism', the abandonment of 'proletarian internationalism' in

favour of 'cosmopolitanism', the failure to respect 'progressive domestic traditions', the spread of 'anti-socialist moods', the marginalisation of genuinely 'Marxist' artists, and cooperation with Western agencies.[17]

It is crucial to realise that this relentless opposition to 1968 underpinned not only the initial establishment of the normalisation order, but the full twenty years of its existence. Indeed, the normalisation regime drew its, admittedly limited, legitimacy from a sustained commitment to combat 'counter-revolutionary sedition'. At the last session of the Central Committee in November 1989, voices could still be heard to the effect that the greatest danger consisted in a return to reform thinking.[18] Thus, long into the 1980s, the year 1968 loomed large as a symbol of the subversion of socialist cultural values and the antipode of socialist engagement. An extensive text written by the former normalisation Minister of Culture Miroslav Brůžek in December 1987 described the development of modern Czechoslovak culture as a series of reversals in the continual struggle of 'progressive forces' against the 'political reaction' that had culminated in 1968.[19] One year later, on the twentieth anniversary of 1968, a book was published by the columnist and exiled State Security agent, Tomáš Řezáč, which painted a picture of 'cultural-political development in the 1960s as a counter-revolution directed by hostile espionage headquarters'.[20]

It is also necessary to state that the consolidation process, at least initially, was more successful in critiquing the past than in building the present. For instance, the purges of the early 1970s transformed artists' unions from relatively large organisations into essentially hobby clubs of political loyalty. In December 1972, the Czech Writers' Union numbered a mere 124 members compared to its original 492, the Czech Union of Composers and Concert Artists numbered 147, down from 913, and the Czech Union of Fine Artists 293 compared with its previous membership of 3687.[21] However, the dearth of those who were 'with us' was a problem not only for the artistic unions, but for artistic production itself. Thus, in response to such an unsatisfactory state of affairs, the agents of normalisation attempted to speak to a new generation that had not been burdened either by Stalinism or by reformism, and for whom the culture of normalisation often represented an opportunity. And thanks to the extensive state subsidising of Czechoslovak culture this strategy of 'wooing' was relatively successful on a regional level (local publishers, galleries, museums, art schools). The process also partly overturned the traditional relationship between the cultural centre and periphery. Several theatre artists for whom

it was no longer politically sustainable to appear on the central stages departed to the 'fringe', away from the excessive glare of the reflectors. As a result, local theatre groups flourished in Cheb, Uherské Hradiště and Gottwaldov (now Zlín), and more marginal fields such as puppet theatres also profited from the situation.[22] In cinematography and book production there was an expansion of works for children. After the end of the purges, party and state bodies did not hesitate to cooperate with outstanding artistic figures from the ranks of the previously excluded, including ostracised artists and those who had been cut off from state sources of financing.

The most notable 'return to the fold' took place during the relatively stable mid-1970s after the purges but before the campaign against the informal civic initiative, Charter 77. 1975 was the year of the 'great return' of Bohumil Hrabal, one of the most popular Czech authors. Subsequent (re)publications and film adaptations of his works became major symbols of the buoyant cultural production of 'real socialism'.[23] Similarly, in 1976 there was a certain stabilisation of the membership of the artistic and creative unions. The largest growth was recorded by the dramatic artists,[24] who, thanks to their appearance on television screens, considerably boosted their social authority and ranked among the main pillars of the normalisation order.[25] Hence, actual cultural policies, though underpinned by the purges and the regime's permanent ideological opposition to 1968, were relatively conciliatory and it is inaccurate to surmise that normalised artistic production suffered from a deficiency of 'real' artists, referred to in official language as 'creative forces'. Even the uncompromising crusade against the so-called 'subversives' of Charter 77 that blighted the intellectual landscape well into the 1980s did not completely overturn this emollient stance.[26] Thus, normalisation cultural policy displayed certain internal inconsistencies: while the cultural ideologues continued to hide behind the interpretation of the 1960s as a period of 'crisis development', and considered the early normalisation purge as the constitutive feature of the socialist order, the reality of this culture, though indisputably exclusive, was in its own way also inclusive. This applied to a greater extent than the ideologues themselves would concede.

The 'Real Socialist' Conception of Culture

Let us repeat that the reform communist conception of culture outlined in the Action Programme reckoned with a multi-faceted development of humanity within the framework of a reformed model of socialist democracy. Cultural policy sought to secure the economic, legislative and ideological autonomy of culture and its institutions. Although culture was intended to operate within the intellectual confines of Marxism, in the spirit of the 1960s doubts were cast on its original Leninist interpretation. Hence, according to Czechoslovak reformists, culture should serve as a means of overcoming alienation in a society that, while socialist, was above all industrially based and characterised by a high degree of expertise and bureaucracy. The humanist nature of culture consisted in the creation of a counterbalance to the scientific-technical revolution, or at a minimum in the cultivation of a technical civilisation, on the foundations of which socialist society could be advanced. Such a demarcation came closer to general Western trends on the industrial character of society than it did to the functions designated by Marxism-Leninism.

The normalisation regime's definition of culture was at first glance similar to reformist theories in that both emphasised the development of the human subject and the securing of individuals' all-round fulfilment within modern society. However, the fundamental difference consisted in the clear delineation between the positive (socialist) as against the destructive (demotivating, 'anarchist', 'decadent') operation of culture. Whereas the former strengthens socialist society, the latter contributes to its destabilisation.[27] Culture in this respect should be a constructive element in the 'development of socialist society' and in the moulding of the 'Socialist Person'. In other words, the period of 'anarchy' in the 1960s was replaced by the purposeful education programme of a 'consolidated' regime. The Minister of Culture Brůžek summarised the function of normalised culture in an analysis from the 1970s: the socialist state must above all fulfil its mission by safeguarding the socialist direction of cultural development.[28] This entailed strict adherence to the crowning principle of the 'leading role of the party', in which the KSČ, as the 'cognitive centre of society',[29] determines an advanced and financially secure cultural policy.

Thus, under normalisation the pivotal concept of 'party-mindedness' returned to the fold as a means of defining the socialist dimension of culture. However, its interpretation differed from that of the 1950s, since the aim of culture was no longer to transmit the revolutionary message from

the party to the masses. Despite the vicissitudes of Stalinism and reform communism, the establishment of the new socialist world had now been fully accomplished. This did not mean that in the world of 'real socialism' culture was to play a merely ornamental role. On the contrary, party-mindedness and socialist character ascribed it pole position in the shaping of socialist society: cultural transformation was as crucial as scientific-technical transformation.[30] Hand in hand with education and the media, culture, in the spirit of correctly conceived party-mindedness, was to contribute to the creation of the 'Socialist Person', their thought and morality.[31] In addition to aesthetic cultivation, culture was intended above all to play an educational role in forging the world view of its recipients. The goal of culture was none other than the reflection and formation of social reality in line with what was imagined to be the socio-cultural dialectic.

Normalisation propaganda no longer sought merely to assert and legitimise the socialist path, as Brezhnevite 'developed socialism' by definition represented the highest form of society. Rather the goal was social unity, designed first to overcome the 'disorder' of the reform period and later to become the 'dynamising factor' in the development of socialist society.[32] As in many other realms, cultural policy in the normalisation era was based on a return to Leninist tenets, in particular Lenin's definition of ideological content, 'folksiness' (*lidovost*), class consciousness ('art will fully rehabilitate the principle of class outlook') and 'proletarian internationalism'. The essential aesthetic criterion once again became realism.[33] The normalisers' conception of culture closely followed Lenin's notion of 'two cultures', bourgeois and socialist. Party cultural watchdogs maintained that the abandonment of this doctrine in favour of 'convergence theory' in the 1960s had resulted in the dereliction of socialist principles, ideological compromise and an 'opening up of space for bourgeois ideology'. After the upheavals of 1968, strict adherence to the fundamental criteria of socialist culture was considered absolutely essential since 'art is a great ideological weapon', which 'must serve the interests of the proletarian class and working people'.[34] Culture was thus meant to be a crucial tool in the 'struggle against capitalism', not through seditious campaigns as in the era of Stalinism, but through the export of cultural products such as quality films and the Czech and Slovak Philharmonic Orchestras.

Another key term in this ideological battle was 'proletarian internationalism', which in the field of national cooperation effectively signified the supremacy of the universal Soviet socialist model. Internationalism thus defined itself in stark opposition to the alleged Czech and Slovak

'chauvinism' and 'cosmopolitanism' of the 1960s, as well as against the search for a 'Czechoslovak road to socialism'. The 'true' path lay in maximal cooperation with the USSR and the other countries of the Eastern bloc.[35] Hence, one of the main priorities of normalisation-era cultural policy was the re-establishment of contacts with socialist countries, primarily the Soviet Union, at the level of the creative media, cultural institutions and artistic unions. An example, among many, of this trend was the increased translation and dramatisation of Soviet authors.

'Folksiness' (*lidovost*), in the sense of 'accessibility' or 'comprehensibility', was replaced in the era of 'real socialist' society by the more sophisticated concept of the 'democratism' of culture. This demand, in its classical Leninist guise, focussed on the 'class conception of democracy' and the quantitative 'dissemination of education and culture' in the search for a new socialist content of art commensurate with the general stage of socialist development. In particular, it resolutely rejected elitism, petty bourgeois culture, commercialisation and the non-socialist cultural production of the 1960s.[36] Art was to be 'diverse in expression and genre', but always profoundly connected with the interests of working people.[37] In order to fulfil its educational function of 'inculcating' and 'advancing' socialist values (for example, 'proletarian internationalism' and 'socialist patriotism'), art had to be simultaneously politically engaged and intelligible. Democratism and humanism were no longer judged from the perspective of artistic criteria or intentions of the creator, but primarily on the basis of ideological orientation and degree of comprehensibility.

In the eyes of the normalisers, the artistic production of the 1960s represented an 'elitist' era which was 'detached from social reality', whereas 'true' socialist culture should be 'for the people, for the workers, not for the elite or some narrow aristocratic stratum'.[38] Art should be devoid of any kind of exclusivity, an attribute which the normalisers believed had caused it to lose its social function in the name of aesthetic demarcation. This stance was also connected with the demand for realism. According to Sáva Šabouk, one of the foremost normalisation art theoreticians, realism did not so much constitute a direct reflection of reality, as had been intrinsic to the socialist realism of the Stalinist era. Complicating the call for comprehensibility and clarity, Šabouk took issue with the benevolent conception of the eminent French Marxist philosopher, Roger Garaudy,[39] and rejected the assertion that 'every work of art somehow corresponds with human life experience'. At the same time, he demonstrated that the 'reflection' of reality in art is not implemented solely by means of a 'portrait' of

reality. Rather, art reflects reality in a 'complex mediated manner', with the use of multiple artistic means of expression. As a result, Šabouk believed that it was necessary to avoid 'categorical judgements on concrete works', since despite their initial incomprehensibility they may be understood over the course of time.[40] This in turn underlined the continued importance of dialectical reasoning in 1970s understandings of culture.

Šabouk's broad definition of realism, incorporating formally unrealistic means of expression, opened up space for relatively substantial variability. Realism did not only signify a depiction of reality, but also a creation of impulses for an active human contribution to the building of socialism or the 'remoulding of reality'. And it is precisely this emphasis on engaged activity, on the formation of social reality that created space for a certain plurality of artistic production regardless of the KSČ's constant censorious warnings about potential ambiguity.[41] Furthermore, programmatic party statements on cultural policy throughout the normalisation era were far removed from the normative demands imposed by post-war socialist realism.

That said, it must be conceded that normalised cultural policy was largely bound up with a negative delineation of culture. This applied not only to the past as we have seen above, but also to contemporary 'abuses', such as 'petty bourgeois vulgarity', 'commercialisation of culture', 'trash', 'anti-socialist tendencies' and the 'spread of bourgeois ideology'.[42] For example, the ideological apparatus of the normalised regime constantly sought to monitor and direct pop culture, criticising its excessive emphasis on marketability, the influence of Western musical style and the appearance of 'petty bourgeois values' in song lyrics. The increase in production and sales may have been positively received, but in the eyes of the cultural watchdogs the record industry was simply failing in terms of 'consistently influencing the lifestyle' of its, mainly younger, recipients.[43] Administrative measures against several cultural periodicals over censorship violations illustrate the fine boundary between the socialist and non-socialist, which could be difficult to negotiate even for experienced editors.[44]

Fears of the permeation of anti-socialist currents into socialist culture had their own internal logic. In addition to the constant threat of a repetition of the 'crisis development' of 1968, this primarily related to the intellectual and value orientation of the youth of the day. Normalisation ideologues are commonly characterised as pragmatic, intellectually deficient, cynical and above all apathetic and detached from reality. But in the materials of the time it is possible to see a certain degree of recognition of

social reality. It is evident from the relevant documents that the architects of cultural policy were at least aware of the alienation of the younger generation, whom they attempted to recruit to the cause of socialism come what may. To this end, countless reports from the 1970s and 1980s referred to the search for ways to address the younger generation of artists and recipients. Similarly, the principles of communist education were incorporated into theoretical articles on cultural production for children and youth,[45] while magazines like *Mladá fronta* ('Youth Front') and *Mladý svět* ('The World of Youth') were subject to strict censorship and film production for children and young people sought to inculcate socialist values.[46] The constant threat of seduction by attractive 'foreign modes' underlay the attempts to forge an affirmative definition of socialist culture. Culture was to be firmly anchored in socialist values, which rested primarily on a positive relationship to the socialist homeland, labour and society. At the beginning of the 1980s, as part of the struggle against the influence of 'foreign elements', one of the fundamental tasks of cultural policy became the building of a system of aesthetic instruction, which was mediated by an entire corpus of educational, cultural and social institutions.[47]

Even the brief era of *perestroika* in the mid-to-late 1980s brought no substantive changes in official cultural policy. Basic demands for ideological content and the polemical and socialist character of art persisted, and until autumn 1988 penetrated practically all party resolutions and public speeches. However, fragmentary shifts are visible in the endeavours to grant greater access to information. A prime example of what might be termed 'normalised *perestroika*' was the politico-cultural journal *Tvorba* ('Creation'), which did not relent in its socialist pugnacity, though it did attempt to open up new themes.[48] As the literary historian Petr Andreas has shown, an article about Milan Kundera from 1987, while sharply critical of the highly successful Czech writer in exile, at the same time broke the information taboo, thereby fulfilling the *perestroika* mission of the magazine.[49]

The persistence of normalised cultural policy was evident at the end of the 1980s above all in the lack of turnover in key personnel. Nevertheless, when the arch-conservative Vasil Biľak was replaced by another pillar of normalisation, Jan Fojtík, as ideology overlord in autumn 1988, the demands of the new era—'democratism', creative thinking and a greater sense of reality—became more discernible.[50] A certain institutional realignment was likewise indicated by the establishment of a Central Committee commission for art and cultural affairs in November 1988. It was headed

by Miroslav Štěpán, who at the time was considered an advocate of *perestroika*. The commission's programme reflected the inherent duality of Czechoslovak *perestroika*: it continued to point out the shortcomings in socialist morality and ethics and called for an offensive against the 'glorification and permeations' of Western artistic production, while indirectly inviting criticism of contemporary abuses and promising an 'expansion of space for the activity' of artistic unions.[51]

These inconspicuous modifications of late normalisation cultural policy went hand in hand with gradual transformations in cultural institutions. For instance, the congresses of Czech and Slovak artistic unions which took place in spring 1987 saw top level personnel changes. Fragmentary knowledge about writers and film-makers reveals a clear tension between the supporters of *perestroika* and the more conservative guardians of the normalisation order. There were calls in particular for a re-evaluation of the banned artefacts of the 1960s, for greater tolerance towards exiled authors, and even for the establishment of mutual dialogue.[52] Thus, it appears that in spite of the rhetoric of the day the continual references to the threat of a repeat of 1968 were slowly losing their efficacy.

Conclusion

One of the most influential hypotheses on the nature of Czechoslovak normalisation is the concept of the 'social contract'. According to this view, citizens surrendered any input in the formation of the public sphere but were left a measure of freedom in the private realm into which the normalised state did not venture. This theory, originally presented in the analyses of Milan Šimečka and Václav Havel in the 1970s and 1980s, was accepted without substantial objection by the historiography of the 1990s.[53] More recently, the exclusively political focus of the 'social contract' theory has been redressed, and several authors have shown that rather than a division it is more apposite to speak of a blending of both realms.[54]

Beyond this, it is my contention that if we take contemporary documents and other sources as more than merely a cynical façade of the ritualised exercise of power, then we can read them as strivings for the very definition and constitution of reality. Under 'real socialism', culture, like the media and propaganda, had the role not only of passively observing, 'decorating' or, as in Havel's 1978 interpretation in 'The Power of the

Powerless', expressing surface conformity, but above all shaping and forging humanity and the human world. These were not meant to be left at the tender mercy of spontaneous creative forces. On the contrary, the normalised conception of culture demanded the 'activation of all educational and cultural forums to stimulate and cultivate creative capacities and develop the intellectual, emotional and moral qualities of the people'.[55] The overall goal was none other than the perfecting of the sole social variant, 'real socialism'.

Despite the best intentions of the normalisers to intervene in the shaping of socialist society and regardless of the generous state subsidising of culture, in the long-term it is quite clear that normalisation ideologues completely lost the battle for the 'moulding' of citizens, particularly the youth and artists. No pop group of the 'Funky Leninz' type, as brought to life in the remarkable novel by Karel Veselý,[56] ever pumped new blood into the veins of late Czechoslovak socialism. Above all, no cultural or journalistic elite leapt to the defence of Czechoslovak socialism when it found itself in its death throes in November 1989.

If we were to gauge the successes and failures of normalisation era cultural policy, it is clear the former relate above all to the establishment of the post-1968 order itself. Where normalisation was genuinely successful was in the rigorous purge it conducted, which in the politico-cultural sphere meant the eradication of all forms of reformist practice. However, where the normalisation effort fell short was surprisingly in its failure to formulate a suitable theory corresponding with the regime's cultural policy, one which would have enabled the creation of a 'real socialist' artistic canon. If realism was defined as a relatively open interpretation of reality, as we have seen in the case of the influential normalisation theoretician Sáva Šabouk, then artistic production would necessarily have to be more pluralistic (because non-canonised) than the initial normalisation endeavour wished to permit. The same internal inconsistency is evident in the permeability of the system towards those who had originally been excluded, a condition which contrasted sharply with the rigorousness of the original purge. In circumstances where the normalisation order lacked a positive conceptual basis and a convincing cultural theory, actual cultural-political practice withered to a negative demarcation, an arbitrary evaluation of what was and was not socialist. Analysis of normalised artistic production shows that the supervision of the cultural-political and ideological realms was partially ineffective and was unable to generate a more distinctive creative environment which could have supported the normalisation regime.

Whereas in the 1960s party intellectuals and artists adopted a critical stance towards the regime and sought ways to reform it, in the normalisation period long-term pressures for the suppression of any kind of reform left no other option than either to passively observe social reality or, ultimately, to reject state socialism as a whole.

Translated by Ashley Davies

Notes

1. P. Janoušek (ed.), *Dějiny české literatury 1945–1989*, vol. 4, (Prague, 2008); V. Just, *Divadlo v totalitním systému: Příběh českého divadla (1945–1989) nejen v datech a souvislostech* (Prague, 2010). See also the special issue of *Slovo a smysl* dedicated to the normalisation of the humanities and social sciences (*Slovo a smysl*, vol. 17, no. 35, 2020). The editors, Jan Wiendl and Martin Nodl, state in their introduction that the 1970s and 1980s 'brought… a long and painful isolation, in contrast to the 1960s', p. 11.

2. This term was coined by Louis Aragon in an article published in *Les Lettres Françaises* in October 1968. For details, see M. Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente?: West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis, 1968* (Budapest, 2007), p. 303; and A. Brogi, 'France, Italy, the Western Communists, and the Prague Spring', in G. Bischof, S. Karner and P. Ruggenthaler (eds), *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968* (Lanham, MD, 2010), pp. 283–315 (here p. 301).

3. After 1968, when reforms were abandoned throughout the Soviet bloc as dangerous experiments, it was believed that the form and structure of the politico-social order were essentially non-conflictual and definitive, and that regardless of certain flaws, a state of permanent development would be achieved. Thus, the terms 'real' or 'developed' socialism were employed to describe the existing polity.

4. These aspects of culture are discussed in other chapters of this volume, especially the contributions by Celia Donert and Miroslav Vaněk.

5. The Stalinist concept of socialist realism represented a set of aesthetic principles and values by which art and culture were supposed to serve as a mediator between the party and the people. However, instead of reflecting reality, socialist realism typically subverted reality in favour of its beautification in line with Marxist-Leninist doctrine. For the Czechoslovak context, see Z. Rusínová, 'The Embodiment of Communist Utopia: Socialist Realism in Slovakia, 1948–1956', in B. Hock, K. Kemp-Welch and J. Owen (eds), *A Reader in East-Central-European Modernism 1918–1956* (London, 2019), pp. 415–27.

6. See F. Westerman, *Engineers of the Soul: In the Footsteps of Stalin's Writers* (London, 2011).

7. 'Akční program KSČ', in J. Vondrová, J. Navrátil and J. Moravec (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Pokus o reformu (říjen 1967–květen 1968)* (Prague and Brno, 1999), pp. 350–2.

8. For details on the alleged longer-term links between the Czechoslovak cultural intelligentsia and foreign powers, see P. Cajthaml, 'Public Relations pro Státní bezpečnost: Bezpečnostní propaganda v letech 1968–1971', *Sborník Archivu bezpečnostních složek*, (2009), pp. 191–241.

9. *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ* (Prague 1971).

10. D. Kretzschmar, *Die Sowjetische Kulturpolitik 1970–1985: Von der verwalteten zur selbstverwalteten Kultur. Analyse und Dokumentation, Bd. 4* (Bochum, 1993), pp. 27–30.

11. 'Záznam úvodního vystoupení Gustáva Husáka na zasedání ústředního výboru KSČ', in J. Vondrová and J. Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Normalizace (listopad 1968–září 1969)*, (Prague and Brno, 2003), pp. 427–8.

12. 'Realizační směrnice k "nejbližším úkolům strany při překonávání krizové situace a konsolidaci poměrů ve společnosti" pro období do XIV. sjezdu KSČ', in Vondrová and Navrátil (eds), *Komunistická strana Československa: Normalizace*, pp. 472–3.

13. In May 1969, regulations on the immediate tasks of the party still read: 'we do not intend to conduct any audit within the party'. See ibid., p. 470. As late as January 1970, Husák, addressing the Central Committee plenum, appealed for a conciliatory approach towards those who had been 'misled', and literally stated that 'whoever is not against us is a potential ally'. See G. Husák, *Projevy a stati. Duben 1969–leden 1970* (Prague, 1970), p. 399. Kádár had been the leader of the Hungarian regime since the abortive uprising in October-November 1956.

14. Národní archiv České republiky (National Archives of the Czech Republic, Prague, henceforth NA), KSČ—ÚV, f. 02/7, sv. 39, a.j. 65, b. 1, 'Stav v konsolidaci kulturní fronty a nejbližší úkoly strany v této oblasti (projednáno 24. listopadu 1970)'.

15. On the normalisation of Czechoslovak cultural and artistic unions, see J. Mervart, *Kultura v karanténě: umělecké svazy a jejich konsolidace za rané normalizace* (Prague, 2015), pp. 44–73.

16. See J. Alan (ed.), *Alternativní kultura: Příběh české společnosti 1945–1989* (Prague, 2001); M. Přibáň et al., *Český literární samizdat 1949–1989: Edice, časopisy, sborníky* (Prague, 2018); L. Formanová, J. Gruntorád and M. Přibáň, *Exilová periodika: Katalog periodik českého a slovenského exilu a krajanských tisků vydávaných po roce 1945* (Prague, 1999). For an earlier

discussion, focused on the role of 'independent historiography' and its success in the 1970s in 'moving far beyond the letter of the 1968 political legacy', see also J. Rupnik, 'The Politics of History Writing in Czechoslovakia', *History Workshop Journal*, 11 (1981), pp. 166–8 (here p. 166).

17. For official commentaries on the congresses of writers, dramatists, composers and fine artists, see *Rudé právo*, 2 June 1972, p. 2; 3 October 1972, p. 2; 20 December 1972, pp. 1–2; and 21 December 1972, p. 2.

18. See *Poslední hurá: Stenografický záznam z mimořádných zasedání ÚV KSČ 24. a 26. listopadu 1989* (Prague, 1992).

19. M. Brůžek, 'Kultura a umění v revolučních proměnách naší společnosti. 1. Ve znamení avantgardy', *Rudé právo*, 28 November 1987, p. 5; 'Kultura a umění v revolučních proměnách naší společnosti. 2. Zápas o novou orientaci', *Rudé právo*, 5 December 1987, p. 5; 'Kultura a umění v revolučních proměnách naší společnosti. 3. Úspěchy a prohry kulturní revoluce', *Rudé právo*, 12 December 1987, p. 6.

20. P. Janáček, 'Tomáš Řezáč', in *Slovník české literatura po roce 1945*, at http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=1309 (last accessed 2 August 2021).

    The book by Řezáč is entitled *Co říkali a co chtěli. Svědectví nejen o roce 1968* (Prague, 1988).

21. NA, KSČ—ÚV, f. 02/4, sv. 47, a.j. 72, b. 6, 'Přestavba a další úkoly uměleckých svazů (předloženo 11. dubna 1973 ministrem kultury M. Müllerem)'.

22. Just, *Divadlo v totalitním systému*, p. 108.

23. Hrabal not only suffered forms of state censorship, but also negative responses from independent cultural figures. For example, the author's compliant appearance in *Tvorba* magazine was met with a demonstrative burning of a number of his books by the prince of the Czech underground, Martin Magor Jirous. See M. Wögerbauer, et al., *V obecném zájmu: Cenzura a sociální regulace literatury v moderní české kultuře 1749–2014*, vol. 2 (Prague, 2015), pp. 1205–7; J. Češka, 'Literatura z dosahu politické četby: Za Hrabalovou variantností a ironií', in ibid., pp. 1871–82.

24. NA, KSČ—PÚV KSČ 1975–1981, sv. 29, a.j. 32, b. 2, 'Zpráva o současné situaci v oblasti umění a dalších úkolech kulturní politiky v souvislosti se sjezdy uměleckých svazů (projednáno 4. února 1977)'.

25. On this theme, see P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and his TV: The Culture of Communism After the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY, 2010).

26. NA, f. Ministry of Education and Culture, kr. 71, sign. 21, 'Za nové tvůrčí činy ve jménu socialism a míru' (Proclamation of the Czechoslovak Committees of the Artists' Unions, 1985).

27. V. Šeda and M. Hromádka, 'Socialistická kulturní politika', in *Kulturní politika socialistického státu: Sborník referátů z celostátního semináře konaného ve dnech 4. a 5. února 1971 v Praze* (Prague, 1971), pp. 32–3.
28. M. Brůžek, 'K některým teoretickým otázkám státní kulturní politiky', in *Kulturní politika socialistického státu*, pp. 16, 37 and 40.
29. Šeda and Hromádka, 'Socialistická kulturní politika', pp. 39 and 49.
30. J. Havlín, 'Školství a kultura po XVI. sjezdu KSČ', in *KSČ a kultura: Sborník dokumentů, projevů a článků ke kulturní politice KSČ 1972–1981*, vol. 4 (Prague, 1985), p. 257.
31. See, for example, one of the situation reports from December 1973, which characterises the mission of the cultural columns of the daily press as not merely the popularisation of culture, but ideological formation by means of culture (NA, f. ČÚTI, kr. 43).
32. Havlín, 'Školství a kultura po XVI. sjezdu KSČ', p. 253.
33. *Konsolidační plán Ministerstva kultury* (Prague, 1970), p. 8; Brůžek, 'K některým teoretickým otázkám státní kulturní politiky', p. 28.
34. 'Z resoluce XIV. sjezdu KSČ', in *XIV. sjezd a naše kultura: Sborník materiálů ze semináře socialistické společnosti pro vědu, kulturu a politiku, uspořádaného dne 14. září 1971 v Praze* (Prague, 1971), p. 4. Šeda and Hromádka, 'Socialistická kulturní politika', pp. 40–2; V. I. Lenin, 'Kritické poznámky k národnostní otázce', in V. I. Lenin, *Spisy, vol. 20, prosinec 1913–srpen 1914* (Prague, 1957), pp. 16–17.
35. For details on the new foreign political orientation, see NA, KSČ—ÚV, f. 02/4 1966–1971, sv. 34, a.j. 57, 'Informace o jednání na ÚV KSSS o problémech spolupráce na ideologickém úseku', and NA, KSČ—ÚV, f. 02/4 1966–1971, sv. 61, a.j. 110, b. 15.
36. Šeda and Hromádka, 'Socialistická kulturní politika', pp. 42–6.
37. 'Z resoluce XIV. sjezdu KSČ', p. 5.
38. Ibid., p. 4.
39. R. Garaudy, *Realismus bez břehů* (Prague, 1964).
40. S. Šabouk, *Břehy realismu* (Prague, 1973), pp. 303, 304 and 323.
41. This concern is evident in several censorship reprimands of the time. See for example NA, f. Český úřad pro tisk a informace (ČÚTI), kr. 36.
42. NA, f. ČÚTI, kr. 43 (One of countless situation reports dated 1973).
43. NA, f. ČÚTI, kr. 79 (One of the reports analysing record production of the Supraphon and Panton labels dated 1979).
44. NA, f. ČÚTI, kr. 59, 'Opatření' (Record of flaws and deficiencies in the mass communication media).
45. J. Toman, 'Normalizace v dětské literatuře sedmdesátých let a její specifika', in J. Wiedl (ed.), *Normy normalizace: sborník referátů z literárněvědné konference 38. Bezručovy Opavy, 11.–13.9.1995* (Prague and Opava, 1996), pp. 75–81.

46. NA, f. ĆÚTI, kr. 36, 'Opatření'; M. Gromová, 'Fantazie nebo ideologie? České pohádkové filmy 70. a 80. let', in P. A. Bílek and B. Činátlová (eds), *Tesilová kavalérie: Popkulturní obrazy normalizace* (Příbram, 2010), pp. 116–23.

47. Havlín, 'Školství a kultura po XVI. sjezdu KSČ', pp. 252 and 256. See also M. Júzl, 'K pojetí estetické výchovy za socialismu', *Tvorba*, no. 34 (1987), n. p.

48. See for example J. Havlín, 'Ofenzívněji i v kultuře a umění', *Tvorba*, no. 43 (1987), p. 3. Also T. Šnellerová, 'Oficiální literární platformy Tvorba—Kmen, kontext jejich vzniku a metakritická pozice. Polemická literární diskuze v pozdních 80. letech jako imitace nezávislé literární kritiky', *Slovo a smysl*, vol. 17, no. 35 (2020), pp. 159–66.

49. P. Andreas, *Vybírat a posuzovat: Literární kritika a interpretace v období normalizace* (Prague, 2016), pp. 115–18.

50. See the extensive report presented in the name of the KSČ Presidium at its session held on 10 October 1988, J. Fojtík, 'Rozvinout ideologickou práci a pozvednout ji na úroveň požadavků doby', *Rudé právo*, 12 October 1988, pp. 3–6.

51. 'Ustavena komise ÚV KSČ pro otázky kultury a umění', *Rudé právo*, 24 November 1988, p. 2.

52. Janoušek (ed.), *Dějiny české literatury 1945–1989*, vol. 4, pp. 51–2; J. Bláhová, 'Ven z trezoru: Přehodnocování a uvolňování zakázaných československých filmů ze 60. let', *Iluminace*, vol. 23, no. 3 (2010), pp. 83–112. On efforts to start a dialogue with artists in exile, see P. Píša, P. Šámal, P. Janáček a kol., *V obecném zájmu: Cenzura a sociální regulace literatury v moderní české kultuře 1749–2014*, vol. 2 (Prague, 2015), p. 1223.

53. On the historiography of the term 'social contract', see J. Mervart, 'Czech Research on Normalization', in Ch. Brenner, M. Pullmann and A. Tippner (eds), *After Utopia: Czechoslovak Normalization Between Experiment and Experience, 1968–1989* (Göttingen, 2022), pp. 365–388. Paulina Bren extended the original social contract to the privatisation of citizenship in her *The Greengrocer and his TV*. See also K. McDermott, *Communist Czechoslovakia, 1945–1989: A Political and Social History* (London, 2015), pp. 159–62.

54. P. Houda, *Normalizační festival: Socialistické paradoxy a postsocialistické korekce* (Prague, 2019); Petr Roubal even speaks of the 'privatisation of the political'. See P. Roubal, *Spartakiads. The Politics of Physical Culture in Communist Czechoslovakia* (Prague, 2019), pp. 227–8.

55. M. Klusák, 'Posilovat socialistické uvědomění: Rozvoj kultury—nedílná součást programu naší strany', in *KSČ a kultura*, vol. 4, p. 263.

56. K. Veselý, *Bomba*Funk* (Prague, 2017).

CHAPTER 10

The 'City of Shoes' Under Normalisation: Local Politics and Socio-Economic Trends in Gottwaldov after 1968

Vítězslav Sommer

In 1983, Czech writer Zdeněk Zapletal published the novel *It Is Late for Loud Music*. Zapletal, born in 1951, lived in the towns of Gottwaldov and Holešov.[1] In his writing, he tried to capture the existential crisis of his generation, which entered adulthood in the 1970s. Zapletal's novels, the most famous of which was the *perestroika* bestseller *Midnight Runners* (1986), realistically describe everyday life in Gottwaldov. *It Is Late for Loud Music* was Zapletal's first masterpiece. In it, he created an

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215

unconventional portrait of the aforementioned eastern Moravian town in the middle of the 'normalisation' period. He characterised Gottwaldov, previously known as Zlín, as a city built many years ago by a shoemaking tycoon who wanted to 'give the small town the hallmark of the city'.[2] Zapletal wrote that neither the shoe manufacturer nor anyone else after him had succeeded.

This ironic representation captured Gottwaldov's special position well. In 1900, it was a small town with 11,000 inhabitants, surrounded by a poor and underdeveloped region on the periphery of the Czech lands. By 1950, it had a population of 60,000 and had undergone rapid development from a little-known town to a major industrial agglomeration. In the 1980s, Gottwaldov had around 80,000 inhabitants and its economic importance went far beyond eastern Moravia.[3] Yet this city still carried the imprint of its rapid transformation into a high modernist industrial powerhouse. The rapid growth of Zlín in the twentieth century meant that it was, primarily, a site of concentrated industrial production and did not resemble the more traditional Central European urban landscape. For a long time, it had the appearance of a small town surrounded by a huge factory and its service facilities. Even today, Zlín still struggles to overcome the unique conditions that shaped its birth as a modern city.

This chapter examines the impact on Gottwaldov of political, economic and social developments in Czechoslovakia after 1968. The first part offers a short overview of the growth of the city before 1968, focusing primarily on the Baťa phenomenon and the continuity between the inter-war and socialist eras. The next part discusses the impact of 1968 on Gottwaldov, thereby offering a local history of the 'consolidation' period after the Warsaw Pact invasion.[4] The third section assesses how larger socio-economic trends inter-acted with the specifics of the normalisation period at the local level. It explores political struggles in the city after August 1968 and analyses the outcome of the party purges that took place in 1970. This is followed by a section showing how the problems of the centrally planned economy affected everyday life in Gottwaldov. Through using local sources, it will be argued that the economic functioning of late socialism fundamentally influenced the development of Czechoslovak society in the 1970s and 1980s, and its relationship to socialism.

From Zlín to Gottwaldov

Before 1945, Zlín was no ordinary city. It took less than three decades for the shoemaking company Baťa to transform it into the Czechoslovak version of a Fordist factory town.[5] The Baťa company, originally a small family business, was established in Zlín in 1894. It experienced its first expansion during the First World War thanks to military contracts. In the 1920s, Tomáš Baťa found inspiration in the American model of a factory town and began to apply it in Zlín. He took control of the city administration and began to rebuild Zlín according to the company's needs. The urban landscape was now dominated by an extensive factory complex, which was surrounded by standardised workers' houses, dormitories, canteens and other buildings. In the 1930s, Zlín had a fully modernist appearance. The typical Baťa building, whether it was a factory hall or a family house, was a functionalist structure built of un-plastered red bricks and in complete conformity with the rules of architectonic standardisation. Functionalist landmarks such as a department store, a hotel, the company's office building (called a 'skyscraper') and a cinema for 2500 spectators exemplified the carefully planned urban structure.[6]

During the Second World War, the company was an important part of the Nazi war economy. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May 1945, two political traditions clashed in Zlín—the left-leaning regime of the newly-established 'Third Republic' and 'Batism'.[7] Although the Baťa company was nationalised in October 1945, the legacy of 'Batism' continued to be a problem for local communists. After the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) took power nationally in 1948, it inflicted a symbolic blow to the traditions of inter-war Zlín by renaming the town Gottwaldov, a move marking the fifty-second birthday of the communist leader Klement Gottwald on 23 November. The Baťa company also had its name changed to Svit.

These political interventions were nonetheless purely symbolic, and the city did not lose its established identity as the centre of the footwear industry in Czechoslovakia. The Baťa model of industrial organisation still influenced all economic activities in the region, including associated projects such as film studios, construction companies, vocational education and investment in chemical engineering, management research, architecture and urban planning. Svit was the parent enterprise of a large conglomerate that united shoe-manufacturing and included production in other towns, such as Třebíč, Zruč nad Sázavou and Skuteč. In addition to the footwear

industry, there were machine works, construction companies and research facilities (for example the Research Institute for Plastic and Rubber Technologies). The major Czechoslovak tyre plant and tannery were located in the neighbouring town of Otrokovice, which, like Zlín, was developed by the Baťa company before 1945. As a district town (*okresní město*), Gottwaldov was the administrative centre of the region.[8] The city housed the headquarters of the Communist Party's district organisation—the District Committee (*Okresní výbor KSČ*, OV KSČ). Gottwaldov was also a regional cultural and educational centre, with the local branch of the Brno University of Technology housed there. By the late 1960s, Gottwaldov was not only a city of workers, but also had a high concentration of members of the technical intelligentsia.

THE EARLY CONSOLIDATION PHASE IN GOTTWALDOV

In the 1960s, the reform process found widespread support among local political, economic and cultural elites as well as the general public.[9] This popularity had several causes. First, the district communist leaders mostly supported the reform wing of the party leadership. This political position had its origins, most probably, in their close ties to the local economic elite. A particularly popular component of the Prague Spring was economic reform, which found supporters in management and party organisations in all important local enterprises. Representatives of major Gottwaldov companies like Svit or the machine tool works ZPS (*Závody přesného strojírenství*) took part in discussions on economic reform at national level and tried to quickly implement it in 'their' enterprises. Another pillar of reform communism was Gottwaldov's cultural sphere, especially the district theatre and film studio. Support also came from the local media, especially the newspaper *Naše pravda* ('Our Truth') published by the OV KSČ, and from students at the local campus of Brno's University of Technology. Trade unions and an increasingly politically active public also played their part in Gottwaldov's version of the Prague Spring. Among the most significant reform issues was the demand to restore the city to its original name.

That said, the 'Gottwaldov Spring' was largely carried by members of the local technical intelligentsia. As Zdeněk Pokluda, an expert on Zlín's regional history, shows, during the 1960s the share of workers in the party decreased in Gottwaldov and surrounding region. For example, in 1967 the local party had 24,328 members, only 35.1 per cent of whom were

workers (compared to 41.8 per cent in 1960).[10] Although the proportion of retirees in local communist organisations also grew in the 1960s, it was the intelligentsia that played a more important role in the reform process. This also meant that normalisation was not possible without fierce conflicts within district party structures. 'Consolidation' in Gottwaldov required harsh disciplining of local elites and party organisations in companies and institutions, such as the District National Commitee (*Okresní národní výbor*, ONV).

The invasion in August 1968 met with general opposition in Gottwaldov. Communist Party bodies and the media, including illegal radio broadcasting, followed the reformist political line. There was also massive criticism of Alois Indra, one of the most prominent pro-Soviet hard-liners and co-author of the infamous 'letter of invitation', who represented the region in the National Assembly (Czechoslovak parliament). The main supporters of the reform policies were representatives of the OV KSČ, especially the chief secretary Jiří Šperka, the head of the Ideological Department Přemysl Roušar and the head of the Industrial Department Oldřich Dvořák. On 30 September, the first plenary session of the OV KSČ after August 1968 fully supported the Prague Spring policies. This meeting also condemned the invasion and called for party unity.[11] However, it was clear that an anti-reformist faction already existed in the local party structures.[12] For now, Alexander Dubček's leadership had full support in Gottwaldov and activists continued their reform-oriented politics, but it was uncertain how long this would last.

The main battleground was the OV KSČ. It was the key institution in charge of making organisational and personnel changes across the party's lower and ancillary networks. Local normalisers needed to win control of this body, partly because district party organisations were subordinated to it, and partly because it cooperated with the Regional Committee of the Communist Party in Brno (*Krajský výbor KSČ*, KV KSČ). Until summer 1969, however, key figures in the OV KSČ were supporters of the reform-oriented faction in the party leadership and backed the reformers at local level.

A particular bastion of reform communism in Gottwaldov was the Svit works (the state-owned successor to the Baťa company). A February 1971 report on the political situation in Svit in 1968 and 1969 provides an insight into what happened in the company during the pivotal period between the August invasion and autumn 1969.[13] According to this document, Svit, a company with 28,600 employees, was a major centre of

'right-wing revisionism' in the region. The key reform communists in the leadership of the OV KSČ, the secretaries Roušar and Nový, had previously worked in Svit and allegedly 'had a lot of acquaintances in the company'.[14] The normalisers identified reform communists working in party cells in the departments of technological development and investment, as well as trade unionists and young party members as the main 'problem' in Svit. These activists found support among the editors of the company magazine *Tep* and in the company radio. In addition to trade unionists, who even launched a campaign called 'trade unions without communists' in autumn 1968, the reform socialist position was defended primarily by engineers, technicians, managers and *Tep* journalists. They demanded the departure of the occupying forces, backed Dubček's leadership, criticised the activities of the conservative communists, supported the student strike and stood up for Jan Palach after his self-immolation in Prague in January 1969.

However, the power dynamics in the enterprise did not wholly favour the reformers. The politics of 'consolidation' was supported by members of the Svit's People's Militia (*Lidové milice*, LM) and communists and trade unionists in that part of the enterprise known as the shoe plant. The report from February 1971 noted that active groups of normalisers promoted a 'consolidation' of party norms in the company and aimed to take power in the party cells. However, this tactic only began to show signs of success in autumn 1969; that is, after the reformers lost their positions in the OV KSČ. According to the February 1971 report, the normalisers triumphed in Svit during October and November 1969. The result was not only purges in the most reform-oriented party cells, but also the resignation of many ordinary employees from these cells.[15] This case study of Svit shows that the most active reform communists were able to hold their institutional positions as long as they had the support of like-minded officials in the OV KSČ. Once the mainstays of the Prague Spring in the city and region lost control of the OV KSČ, there was nothing to prevent 'consolidation' from permeating all layers of the local party bureaucracy.

The decisive encounters took place in spring and summer 1969. As in the rest of Czechoslovakia, the main trigger was the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (KSČ CC) in April 1969, at which Gustáv Husák replaced Dubček as First Secretary. This development caused considerable disquiet among Gottwaldov communists. In May and June 1969, district information reports described many critical reactions to the rise of Husák, including spontaneous resignations from the party or

refusal to engage in any party-led political activity.[16] The supporters of 'consolidation', who were significantly strengthened by the change in the party leadership, increased the pressure. In May and June 1969, local party and government bodies (the presidium of the OV KSČ and the ONV plenum) officially apologised to Indra and other anti-reformist politicians for criticising them after the August invasion. Indra and Miloš Jakeš, who started his political career in Zlín after 1945 and went on to become Husák's successor as KSČ First Secretary in 1987, even came to Gottwaldov in June and spoke at public meetings in support of 'consolidation'.[17]

The decisive blow to the local reformers was the OV KSČ session, which took place from 2–3 July 1969.[18] According to the meeting's agenda, published in advance in the local press, it was clear that the aim of this event was the full implementation of 'consolidation' in Gottwaldov.[19] Under the supervision of representatives of higher party bodies from Brno and Prague, the plenum adopted the 'consolidation' line of the Husák leadership. A new presidency of the OV KSČ was elected and while chief secretary Šperka retained his post, the main Gottwaldov reformers Roušar and Dvořák were removed from office.[20] The new executive was thus willing and able to discipline lower party organisations and end the reform era in Gottwaldov. Over the course of the following months, they dismissed the remaining reformers from the OV KSČ, the key personnel change occurring in late September when Šperka resigned and was replaced by the normaliser Vincenc Gajdošík. Šperka announced that his resignation was not only due to health problems, but to the political pressures he had been under.[21] Gajdošík's position was unambiguous. His first public announcement was: 'Yes to the January 1968 policies, but no to the post-January developments!'.[22]

However, it was difficult to gain popular support for this political turn. On 21 August 1969, the first anniversary of the invasion, a mass demonstration took place in Gottwaldov, accompanied by clashes between protesters and units of the LM, army and Public Security forces (*Veřejná bezpečnost*, VB).[23] In September 1969, OV KSČ information reports mentioned the appearance of anti-Soviet and anti-occupation signs and posters as well as confusion and fierce debates in local party organisations, including open struggles between reformers and supporters of 'consolidation'.[24] Reintroducing discipline to party bodies was also complicated by the reluctance of ordinary communists to take harsh administrative measures against their colleagues or resolutely and publicly to reject the Prague

Spring. For example, in October 1969 the OV KSČ leadership criticised the organisation of the Gottwaldov City Committee of the KSČ for 'liberalist tendencies' in its evaluation of the events of 1968 and 1969.[25]

The official summary of the 'consolidation' phase in the Gottwaldov district in 1969 and 1970, drawn up in autumn 1970, provides an insight into conflicts at lower levels of the local party hierarchy.[26] Not only the city, but the whole district was 'strongly affected by right-wing opportunism, nationalism and even chauvinism'. The 'opportunists' allegedly played an important role in local politics, culture and economics, and 'therefore the positions of these people were extremely strong in the district'. By contrast, 'the healthy core of the party found it very difficult to gain a foothold'. The OV KSČ apparatus underwent a purge in 1969 after the July plenary session. All employees of the Ideological Department and 'almost all administrative workers' were forced out. At the same time, a purge took place in the ONV. By the end of 1969, the leading political and administrative bodies in Gottwaldov were fully normalised, but at the lower levels of the party hierarchy this process lasted longer, only coming to an end halfway through 1970.

Where did the 'normalisers' meet the greatest resistance? On the one hand, the report mentions that in 1969, many ordinary communists decided to leave the party voluntarily, mainly because of their opposition to political developments in the country or their open disagreement with 'consolidation'. Some organisations, such as the ZPS party cell, witnessed mass resignations, with up to 35 per cent of members quitting. Other party cells simply refused to participate in the purge. In some cases, opposition was concentrated in trade unions or management. In the ZPS works, for example, trade unions were the bastion of resistance, whereas in the *Pozemní stavby* construction company or at the Research Institute of Plastic and Rubber Technologies it was the party leadership that took up the struggle against 'consolidation'. Management played an important role in both major construction companies (*Průmyslové stavby* and *Pozemní stavby*) and in the *Stavoprojekt*—the Gottwaldov branch of the state-owned architecture and projecting company. According to the autumn 1970 report, local centres of 'opportunism' also included the district theatre, research institutes and a number of schools and cultural institutions. From the perspective of the normalisers, opposition did not have to take the form of a fundamental rejection of the new politics. They also considered ideological restraint, negligence in analysing the roots of 'opportunism' or

a reluctance to endorse sanctions against fellow workers to be major obstacles to 'consolidation'.

As in the rest of Czechoslovakia, the 'consolidation' process culminated in party members being interviewed. This was a key part of the 'exchange of membership cards' operation and was announced at the KSČ CC meeting on 28–30 January 1970. This meant that the OV KSČ had to appoint members of 'screening commissions' in individual party organisations and supervise their conduct of interviews.[27] Party members were invited to a meeting to explain their activities and political views in 1968 and 1969. Based on the interview, the commission decided whether the communist would receive a new membership card, have their membership 'cancelled' or face outright 'expulsion', which was the harshest disciplinary measure.[28] The commission then submitted its decision to a session of the party organisation, which had the final say on whether to accept the commission's recommendations. For individual communists, this process was extremely humiliating. Not only did they often have to engage in degrading forms of self-criticism during the interviews, but they were also required to publicly support the punishment of their comrades.

The information gathered by the OV KSČ about the interviews shows that the purge did not run smoothly. For instance, a report from April 1970 stated that during votes at party meetings on 'expulsion' or 'cancellation of membership', one quarter to one third of those present abstained. This was put down to 'emotional relationships' or friendships with those being purged. Moreover, young party members in particular were reportedly 'confused', 'uninformed' and had 'little knowledge' of what happened in 1968 and 1969.[29] Another report stated that in some firms, for example in Svit, *Pozemní stavby* and *Stavoprojekt*, party cells refused to 'implement the political intentions' of the new OV KSČ executive. The leadership of the party cell in *Stavoprojekt* even preferred to resign voluntarily rather than take part in the purge. Alleged cases of 'nervousness', 'opportunism' or 'passivity' among party members meant that the OV KSČ had to temporarily suspend the interview process in some organisations.[30]

What did the purge look like in a particular company? In *Pozemní stavby*, to take one example, sixty-five communists had already voluntarily resigned from the party in 1969 in order to show their opposition to 'consolidation'. A number of personnel changes in leading positions in the party cells there were thus necessary before 'normalisation' could proceed. The interviews in *Pozemní stavby* also did not go as planned. Some

commissions were insufficiently strict and reluctant to contribute to a thorough cleansing of the party. Moreover, the interviews caused a number of disputes within the company, ending in the dismissal of its director and a further reduction in party membership. While 518 communists worked in the company in January 1968, this had fallen to 422 by January 1969, 420 by March 1970, and a mere 308 by mid-August 1970, when the purge ended. In the aftermath of the interviews thirty-four communists were punished by expulsion, only four of whom were workers. The expulsion affected, for example, the chairman of the trade union, one of the company's assistant directors and the editor-in-chief of its corporate magazine.[31]

Another example would be the ONV apparatus, the institution that local normalisers considered one of the centres of 'right-wing revisionism' in Gottwaldov. In the ONV, almost thirty employees were expelled from the party. Among them were Josef Inochovský, the head of the Department of Culture and an important local reformer, and five editors of the newspaper *Naše pravda*. All those who were expelled also left the institution they worked for, either before they were purged or at some point between 1970 and 1972. Often they ended up working in less prestigious positions. After the purge, Inochovský worked as a dispatcher in a company dealing with the supply and purchase of agricultural goods.[32]

What were the outcomes of the purges in the entire Gottwaldov district? An important source is the statistics compiled for the plenary session of the OV KSČ, which took place on 1 October 1970.[33] According to this document, by the beginning of September 1970 interviews with 21,379 party members had taken place. Of these, 15,588 (72.7 per cent) received a new party membership card. Membership was cancelled in the case of 5015 communists (23.5 per cent) and 834 were expelled from the party (3.8 per cent). In September 1970, the fate of another 212 communists was still unresolved, but in effect the process was almost complete. Party membership in the district had decreased overall by 27.3 per cent.[34] This result was consistent with the overall outcome of the purge. The number of Communist Party members in Czechoslovakia fell by 28 per cent between January 1968 and October 1970.[35]

Data on social or class composition are also interesting. Even before the purge began, the normalisers set a goal of increasing the share of workers among party members by 4.7 per cent. However, they did not succeed because 'before the interviews, 875 workers left the party due to their disagreement with its policy'.[36] This meant that, compared with January

1970, the proportion of workers among members of the party actually decreased from 28.1 per cent to 27.2 per cent. In industrial enterprises in Gottwaldov and the surrounding region, workers now accounted for 49.2 per cent of the party's membership, with the remaining 50.8 per cent being classified as 'technical and economic employees' (*technicko-hospodářští pracovníci*). This ratio was still a 5 per cent improvement in favour of workers compared to the situation before the purge. However, only six industrial enterprises in the district of Gottwaldov had party cells where the majority of members were workers. On the other hand, the OV KSČ report claimed the fact that 33.4 per cent of members had left the most 'revisionist' organisations as a 'significant success'. Overall, the purge caused a significant reduction in the party's membership. The number of party cells in the region also decreased from 549 in 1967 to 509 in 1970.[37]

In terms of age structure, expulsion and cancellation of membership hit communists born between 1915 and 1944 the hardest. By contrast, communists born before 1915 were the least affected by the purges. As far as overall numbers are concerned, the purge also had little effect on the youngest party members (those born after 1945). This age group, however, was by far the smallest in number among party members—before the purge, there were 449 communists in the district born after 1945, while the largest age group consisted of communists born before 1915 (6532 members). After the purge, 321 of the 449 youngest communists received a new membership card. The vast majority of those affected by the purge, however, lost their membership because of alleged 'passivity', 'failure to fulfill their duties' and 'disinterest' in party membership.[38]

The impact of the purge on Gottwaldov and the surrounding region cannot be expressed by dry statistics alone. These extensive disciplinary measures, including not only the 'exchange of membership cards', but also dismissals and other punishments affecting individual professional careers, hit the local reform communists hard. In a relatively short period of time, 'consolidation' changed conditions in local party and administrative bodies, trade unions, enterprises, media and cultural and educational institutions. This policy created new power relations in the region and gave birth to a new local elite. The purge also caused open wounds in the community because those affected by this repression bore its consequences for the next twenty years.

Gottwaldov in the Era of Late Socialism

How did Gottwaldov continue to develop after the normalisers achieved their goals? The years 1968 to 1970 cannot be interpreted other than as a relatively short period full of major political upheavals. Compared to that, the last two socialist decades are often, and stereotypically, described as an era of grey 'timelessness', without significant historical events – as Miroslav Vaněk also critically discusses in his contribution to this volume. However, long-term socio-economic and cultural trends worked beneath the seemingly calm surface of this authoritarian stability. The results of these processes were economic stagnation and a sense of dissatisfaction among citizens.

The brief portrait of Gottwaldov in late socialism provided in this section is based on local archival documents. The archive collection of the OV KSČ contains complaints from individual citizens and reports from party organisations about the 'political and economic situation' in state enterprises. Summary reports on the political situation in the Gottwaldov district are available as well as similar sources such as information reports on political attitudes in the National Front organisations (that is, various official interest associations) and among young people. Historians can also examine reports on the supply of consumer goods, the health of the population or the state of the environment. I also use documents from the Svit archive on the company's approach to welfare policies and labour relations. These materials are often fragmentary, relating to individual cases and usually do not cover the entire period from 1970 to 1989. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, they provide a relatively comprehensive picture of the social and economic development of Gottwaldov and the surrounding region.

Gottwaldov, thanks to the legacy of inter-war 'Batism', seemed like an ideal local environment for the implementation of the political and economic strategies of the normalisation regime. In the 1970s, the state introduced generous welfare policies that were closely linked to the workplace. It resulted in the 'corporatisation' of the welfare state.[39] This meant that the state attempted to shift the burden of welfare policies to individual enterprises, which were tasked with building apartments, running schools and kindergartens, and organising cultural activities and leisure time for employees and their families. In the long run, this policy aimed to ensure material well-being, to strengthen specifically socialist values and culture, and thus to reinforce social and political stability. However, it

placed a disproportionate onus on enterprises, which had to finance welfare programmes from their own funds. Compared to earlier models of corporate welfare, the path taken in Czechoslovakia after 1968 involved central planning and organisation and was ultimately designed to bolster the socialist character of Czechoslovak society. At the same time, as I will show below, it was intended to be a pragmatic solution to some of the pressing problems of the Czechoslovak economy.[40]

A detailed picture of these measures is provided by the Svit welfare plan for the years 1972 to 1975.[41] On the one hand, this document demonstrates the extent to which the welfare activity of the most important local enterprise was linked to the development of the city. By 1975, Svit wanted to build more than 1200 apartments, repair older ones and erect additional housing infrastructure (hostels, dormitories). It promised to provide its employees with 3.7 million Czechoslovak crowns in the form of loans for the construction of their own housing. The company also contributed to the development of local health care facilities, including the modernisation of the Svit clinic. In addition, the plan included improvements to corporate recreational facilities, greater funding for workers' holidays and further development of child and youth care (including kindergartens and the Svit vocational school).

However, this was no charitable exercise on the part of a state-owned enterprise. The document and subsequent discussions by the management show that these measures were primarily intended to stabilise the workforce.[42] At a time when the Czechoslovak economy struggled with labour shortages, 'corporatised' welfare would ensure that, for example, Svit was able to recruit and retain the employees it needed. Therefore, the plan also addressed occupational safety, the quality of the working environment and the development of a stable hiring process. These measures were not an expression of the bold welfare ambitions of a socialist enterprise, but rather an effort to find practical solutions to the labour shortages that blighted not only Svit and other enterprises, but also the entire city and region.

From the 1970s, efforts to stabilise the workforce and prevent high staff turnover dominated corporate welfare strategies.[43] Svit aimed to solve problems such as the lack of qualifications among its employees, increasing work accidents and the constant need for overtime and weekend work, all of which threatened the achievement of the plan. In particular, the latter problem was a key source of employee discontent in the company.[44] The work in the production of footwear was also physically demanding and very labour-intensive. For example, a March 1975 report to senior

management on workforce stabilisation stated that 'year after year there has been a greater and greater workforce shortage', which 'is becoming a limiting factor in the fulfillment of production and other indicators of our enterprise'.[45]

A similar document from 1979, prepared for the Economic Commission of the OV KSČ, indicates that these issues were getting worse. The shortage of manpower continued to have a negative effect on Svit's performance. The construction of flats in the city was slow, the social infrastructure of the company lagged behind and the demand for work in the footwear industry continued to decline. The company also failed to replace the lost workforce with the use of new production technologies.[46] In 1989, another analysis openly confirmed the previous finding that fewer and fewer people wanted to do physically demanding, monotonous, poorly organised and unsatisfactory work in a highly inhospitable environment.[47] The employment of foreign workers, which began in the early 1970s, did not solve this problem either.[48]

Gottwaldov did benefit from the investment of Svit and other companies in social infrastructure, for example in the construction of apartments and improvements to schools, health care and cultural facilities. In the long run, however, the ongoing workforce crisis meant that anchoring the local economy in the footwear industry and related manufacturing posed a serious challenge to the further prosperity of the city and the region. In the 1980s, the failures of central planning, combined with the effects of long-term social and cultural changes, brought the era of the 'city of shoes', which had begun around 1900, to an end. As various surveys of popular opinion and the economic situation in the city show, the social and industrial problems typical of late socialism were very much present in Gottwaldov.

In a city created around industrial production, the contradictions of central planning manifested themselves on many levels of everyday life. Reports on the political and economic situation in enterprises from 1985 and 1986 compiled by party cells in individual factories, show what difficulties these companies experienced and what generated employee discontent.[49] For instance, the irregular supply of materials or spare parts complicated the flow of production and thus the fulfillment of the plan. The technological obsolescence of machinery and the overall slow pace of technological innovation were also frequent grievances. Employees further lamented the poor supply and quality of consumer goods and the constant failures of the service sector. In short, they were permanently

dissatisfied with the impact of the 'economy of shortage' on their lives. This basic and recurring content of complaints is also documented in other sources.[50]

The existence of the informal economy and unpredictable supply policies often led to economic absurdities. While historians usually associate the experience of absurdity with the existential dilemmas of individuals living under late socialist dictatorship, economic absurdity was based on more immediate material and sensory experiences both at the everyday and systemic level. It tied together large-scale mechanisms of central planning with individual struggles for consumer satisfaction. An example of this economic absurdity was the situation described in a June 1983 report on the availability of consumer goods in selected stores in Gottwaldov, indicating that at the beginning of the summer there was a chronic shortage of seasonal shoes for children and adults. This supply crisis occurred in a city which was a major centre of shoe manufacturing and supplied the entire Eastern Bloc with footwear.[51] Here, the systemic failure of central planning collided with the mundane experience of the 'ordinary' citizen who aimed to satisfy his or her consumer needs. Such experiences of economic absurdity may have led many in Czechoslovakia to conclude that socialism was at its core an irrational social order, irrational not in terms of its utopian goals but at the everyday level of the functioning of a centrally planned economy.

Finally, it is necessary to mention one long-term trend, which had a major impact on the quality of life. Serious environmental problems proved that state socialism suffered from a deep crisis.[52] In Gottwaldov, the local authorities had to address both the environmental impact of industry and the negative consequences of agricultural production in the surrounding region.[53] The factories in Gottwaldov and Otrokovice were significant air polluters. The major source of pollution was the technologically obsolete Svit heating plant, which supplied warmth to the city. Moreover, the tannery, the tyre factory and the shoemaking industry in general required extensive use of chemicals. This not only posed a risk of air and soil contamination, but, due to outdated or inadequately equipped factory buildings, impacted negatively on workers' health. Agricultural production was harmful to the environment as well. Farming methods and the use of chemicals had an impact on soil quality and drinking water. Waste management was also a huge problem. For example, illegal waste dumps not only tarnished the landscape, but also contributed to soil and air contamination.

The environmental situation in the city and region was summarised in a report for the October 1989 session of the OV KSČ.[54] This document proves that the authorities were well aware of these issues and tried to address them. However, it also demonstrates that crucial large-scale investments and technological innovations were planned for the 1990s and that the changes in the approach to industrial and agricultural production, which were made in the 1980s, were insufficient. Similarly, even though the environmental movement was active in the region, individual households were often not environmentally conscious at all. The local authorities were fully cognisant of the need to deal more systematically with environmental degradation.[55] However, given the seriousness of the situation, these developments came too late and were technologically and financially limited by the troubled state of the Czechoslovak economy.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a regional case study of the history of late socialism in Czechoslovakia. The section on the normalisation purge analysed how the 'consolidation' regime was established in one Moravian industrial city. It showed that local efforts to suppress reform communism faced resistance in lower party organisations, trade unions and among individual communists. The 'consolidation' leadership of the OV KSČ had to make great efforts to enforce the new policy in 1969–1970 and carry out the purge. The result was significant personnel change in enterprises, cultural and educational institutions, and state and party bodies. The second part of the chapter outlined the impact of long-term social and economic trends in the 1970s and 1980s on the development of the city and the region. Gottwaldov was visited by chronic labour shortages, which had a major impact on the local industrial base. Poor working conditions, the failures of central planning and the decline in the attractiveness of work in industry caused a constant shortage of employees and high turnover rates. Various welfare measures financed by local enterprises failed to solve this problem. The everyday life of ordinary citizens was also affected by other pathologies and failures of late socialism, such as environmental degradation, corruption, problems in the supply of consumer goods and social inequalities stemming from formal and informal power structures.

A significant local phenomenon, which attracted the attention of the whole country during the *perestroika* era, was the agricultural cooperative in Slušovice, eight miles to the east of Gottwaldov. JZD Agrokombinát

Slušovice became famous for using modern management methods and entrepreneurial approaches usually associated with the economic reforms abandoned after 1968. In the 1980s, Slušovice was a highly successful agricultural enterprise with international ambitions. It also invested in bio-technology and information technologies (Slušovice produced its own brand of personal computers and had its own Tuzex shops with all the colourful, western-style advertising that went with them, as Celia Donert also mentions in her chapter in this volume). The so-called 'Slušovice miracle' looked like an island of capitalist prosperity in a sea of declining central planning. At the end of the 1980s, it was celebrated as a model of the new socialist entrepreneurship. Slušovice was a *perestroika* dream come true.[56]

Slušovice's success contrasted sharply with the situation in the Gottwaldov enterprises described above. And there was a certain irony in that, too. While traditional industrial conglomerates struggled with workforce shortages and technological backwardness, an agricultural cooperative in a small town made huge profits and produced personal computers. Slušovice attracted the most competent workers from the entire region and was also willing to hire talented employees with a problematic political past. It offered high salaries and a working environment suitable for ambitious and hard-working professionals. This only added to the long list of economic absurdities noted above. The mass production of footwear, upon which the city had based its growing economic success in the 1920s and 1930s, struggled with many difficulties. And an agricultural cooperative, which was able to take advantage of its position on the fringes of the centrally planned economy, celebrated unprecedented success. This contrast between Gottwaldov and Slušovice symbolised the economic absurdities of late socialism.

The 1990s marked the beginning of a new era. Gottwaldov became, once again, Zlín. JZD AK Slušovice collapsed in the wake of privatisation, as did Svit. Post-communism brought post-industrialism to the city. Mass production of footwear ended around the year 2000, when Svit formally ceased its operations.[57] Although the inter-war Baťa mythology returned in full force, Zlín ceased to be the 'city of shoes'. Today, the city's identity is entirely built on the Baťa legend (or the capitalist miracle of the inter-war period) and the era of state socialism has become a rather neglected period in local history. As a result, the town derives its identity from the illustrious history of the local shoemaking industry, which, ironically, had its last years of glory in the late socialist era and disappeared during the

transition from socialism to capitalism. Nevertheless, after its inter-war fame and turbulent development during the post-war period, Zlín, as Zapletal claimed ironically in 1983, still struggles to 'give the small town the hallmark of the city'.

Notes

1. Today, the city uses its original historical name Zlín. The name Gottwaldov was used in the years 1949 to 1989. In this chapter, I use Gottwaldov for the era of state socialism and Zlín for the period before 1949 and after 1989. For the history of Zlín, see Z. Pokluda, *Sedm století zlínských dějin* (Zlín, 2006).
2. Z. Zapletal, *Pozdě na hlasitou hudbu*, new ed. (Prague, 1993) [1983], p. 16.
3. For statistics on population growth, see J. Růžková and J. Škrabal (eds), *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*, 2 vols. (Prague 2006), pp. 702–3, at https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20538302/13n106cd1.pdf (last accessed 3 August 2021).
4. Historians usually use the terms 'normalisation' or 'consolidation' to refer to the political change after 1968. Both terms were part of the official ideological language after August 1968. While 'consolidation' refers primarily to the immediate policies designed to suppress reforms, the word 'normalisation' denotes both these policies and the entire period from 1968 to 1989. However, the term 'consolidation regime' is also sometimes used to refer to the last two decades of state socialism in their entirety.
5. For the history of Baťa company, see B. Lehár, *Dějiny Baťova koncernu (1894–1945)* (Prague, 1960); P. Roušar, *Dějiny národního podniku Svit. 1. díl, Nár. podnik Baťa (1945–1948)* (Prague, 1967); M. Marek, *Středoevropské aktivity Baťova koncernu za druhé světové války* (Brno, 2017) and Z. A. Doleshal, *In the Kingdom of Shoes: Bata, Zlín, Globalization, 1894–1945* (Toronto, 2021).
6. See O. Ševeček, *Zrození Baťovy průmyslové metropole: továrna, městský prostor a společnost ve Zlíně v letech 1900–1938* (České Budějovice, 2009); and K. Klingan and K. Gust (eds), *A Utopia of Modernity: Zlín: Revisiting Baťa's Functional City* (Berlin 2009).
7. For the communist critique of 'Batism', see E. Dvořáková, *Batismus a baťovci* (Gottwaldov, 1960); T. Svatopluk, *Batismus v kostce* (Gottwaldov, 1950); and B. Kučera, *Batismus – ideologie sociálfašismu* (Gottwaldov, 1959).

8. In 1980, Gottwaldov district had 191,634 inhabitants. See Růžková and Škrabal (eds), *Historický lexikon obcí České republiky 1869–2005*, p. 700, at https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/20538302/13n106cd1.pdf (last accessed 3 August 2021).

9. For the history of 1968 in Gottwaldov, see Z. Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', *Zlínsko od minulosti k současnosti* vol. 18, no. 1 (2001), pp. 109–32; and O. Adamec, 'Svit v roce 1968', *Acta musealia Muzea jihovýchodní Moravy ve Zlíně: články a studie, musealia, personalie* vol. 5, nos. 1–2 (2005), pp. 85–90.

10. Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', p. 113.

11. 'Rezoluce přijatá plenárním zasedáním OV KSČ k hodnocení polednové politiky', *Naše pravda*, 4 October 1968, p. 1.

12. For the rumours of anti-reformist activities during the September plenary session, see 'Pozor na provokace', *Naše pravda*, 4 October 1968, p. 1.

13. Moravský zemský archiv v Brně – Státní okresní archiv Zlín (Moravian Regional Archive in Brno – State District Archive Zlín, henceforth MZA – SOkA Zlín), fond Okresní výbor KSČ (f. OV KSČ), inventární číslo (i.č.) 249, 'Poučení z politicko-hospodářského vývoje v n. p. Svit v letech 1968–1969' (February 1971).

14. Ibid., p. 2.

15. Ibid., pp. 23–4 and 29–30.

16. See the 'Information reports (Informativní zprávy) on the situation in the Gottwaldov district' sent from the OV KSČ to the KV KSČ in Brno in MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, 'Informativní zpráva o průběhu květnových schůzí, Informativní zpráva o projednávání výsledků květnového pléna ÚV KSČ (25 June 1969)'; and 'Informace o současné situaci v okrese Gottwaldov (16 May 1969)'.

17. Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', p. 131. For the apology of the OV KSČ presidium to Alois Indra, see 'Prohlášení předsednictva Okresního výboru KSČ', *Naše pravda*, 13 June 1969, p. 1. This self-deprecating document claimed that the OV KSČ had 'succumbed to disorientation', and made, in a moment of 'psychosis' and 'without evidence', the 'wrong decision' in August 1968. This apology was meant to 'sincerely and honestly correct the injustice'.

18. For the outcomes of this meeting, see Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', p. 131.

19. 'Mimořádné předsednictvo OV KSČ v sobotu připravovalo dvoudenní plenární zasedání okresního výboru naší strany', *Naše pravda*, 1 July 1969, p. 1.

20. 'Zpráva o jednání pléna OV KSČ v Gottwaldově. Hodnocení polednového vývoje', *Naše pravda*, 4 July 1969, p. 1.

21. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Zpráva o mimořádném plénu OV KSČ Gottwaldov dne 24.9.1969'.

22. For the list of these personal changes, see Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', p. 132. For the appointment of Gajdošík and his announcement, see 'Nový vedoucí tajemník OV KSČ, inženýr Vincenc Gajdošík: "Polednovou politiku ano, ale ne polednový vývoj!"', *Naše pravda*, 20 September 1969, p. 1.

23. Pokluda states that there were up to 2000 demonstrators in the streets. See Pokluda, 'Zlín v období reforem 1968', p. 132. For the statement of the presidium of the OV KSČ, see MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Stanovisko POV KSČ v Gottwaldově (22.8.1969)'. This document described the protesters as a 'group of youngsters' and 'rioters'. For the public condemnation of the demonstration by local authorities, see 'Odsuzujeme neuvážené činy. Stanoviska předsednictva OV KSČ a rady ONV', *Naše pravda*, 26 August 1969, p. 1.

24. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Zpráva o politické situaci v okrese Gottwaldov ke dni 16. 9. 1969' and 'Zpráva o politické situaci v okrese Gottwaldov ke dni 23.9.1969'.

25. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Z jednání POV KSČ dne 24.11.1969'.

26. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 366, 'Zpráva o přípravě, průběhu a výsledcích výměny členských legitimací v okrese Gottwaldov, Projednáváno na plénu OV KSČ dne 1.10.1970'. All quotations in the following section about local resistance to consolidation are from this report.

27. For the organisation of 'screening commissions' in Gottwaldov district, see MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 365, 'Návrh na složení skupin OV KSČ Gottwladov pro provedení pohovorů s členy a kandidáty OV, OKRK, pracovníky aparátu a aktivu OV KSČ' and 'Návrh politickoorganizačního a technického zabezpečení výměny členských legitimací a dokončení očisty strany v roce 1970'.

28. Someone whose membership was 'cancelled' was temporarily removed from the list of party members but had the chance to rejoin the party after a certain period of time. It was a less severe form of punishment than 'expulsion', but still had an impact, for example, on the professional careers of individual communists.

29. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Informativní zpráva z 10. 4. 1970 z OV KSČ Gottwaldov'.

30. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 338, 'Informativní zpráva o stavu pohovorů z okresu Gottwaldov'.

31. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 286, 'CV KSČ n. p. Pozemní stavby Gottwaldov (1967–1971), Zpráva SV KSČ při n.p. Pozemní stavby Gottwaldov o ukončení pohovorů k výměně členských legitimací KSČ v r.

1970, 7. srpna 1970' and 'Zhodnocení výměny stranických legitimací v ZO řízených Stranickým výborem KSČ při národním podniku Pozemní stavby Gottwaldov, 15. srpna 1970'.

32. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 370, 'Výměna členských legitimací v rámci ZO KSČ ONV Gottwaldov, Přehled: 1) Očista aparátu a kulturních zařízení ONV Gottwaldov, 2) Vyloučení a zruš. členství v KSČ v roce 1970 v rámci ZO KSČ ONV Gottwaldov'.

33. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 366, 'Výměna členských legitimací – zprávy o přípravě, průběhu a výsledcích v rámci okresu, Pro plenární zasedání OV KSČ. Zpráva o přípravě, průběhu a výsledcích výměny členských legitimací v okrese Gottwaldov. Návrhy příštích úkolů, 10.9.1970'. For the official report on this plenary session of the OV KSČ, see 'Plenární zasedání OV KSČ určilo směr v práci sjednocovat stranu', *Naše pravda*, 6 October 1970, p. 1.

34. Slightly different numbers are provided by computer processing of the data on the purge from the end of December 1970. It states that as of 15 September 1970 there was data on 19,684 interviews. Of these, 15,688 persons remained in the party, 3369 were cancelled, 607 were expelled and the remaining 20 interview protocols contained no specific information on membership. These differences were probably caused by the different number of interview protocols processed by the computer. See MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 368, 'Výměna členských legitimací – strojní zpracování, Informativní zpráva k vyhodnocení strojního zpracování protokolových záznamů pohovorů při výměně členských legitimací'.

35. J. Maňák, *Čistky v Komunistické straně Československa 1969–1970* (Prague, 1997), p. 117.

36. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 366, 'Výměna členských legitimací – zprávy o přípravě, průběhu a výsledcích v rámci okresu, Pro plenární zasedání OV KSČ. Zpráva o přípravě, průběhu a výsledcích výměny členských legitimací v okrese Gottwaldov. Návrhy příštích úkolů, 10.9.1970'.

37. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 330, 'Údaje o vývoji okresní organizace v letech 1967–1970, názory na konsolidační proces, Některé vnitrostranické údaje o vývoji okresní organizace od r. 1967–1970'.

38. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 368, 'Výměna členských legitimací – strojní zpracování, Informativní zpráva k vyhodnocení strojního zpracování protokolových záznamů pohovorů při výměně členských legitimací', Table no. 3.

39. J. Rákosník and J. Tomeš et al., *Sociální stát v Československu: Právně-institucionální vývoj v letech 1918–1992* (Prague, 2012), pp. 170–91.

40. For social planning in Czechoslovakia, see V. Sommer, 'Managing Socialist Industrialism: Czechoslovak Management Studies in the 1960s and 1970s', in M. Christian, S. Kott and O. Matějka (eds), *Planning in Cold*

War Europe: Competition, Cooperation, Circulations (1950s-1970s) (Berlin and Boston, MA, 2018), pp. 237–60.

41. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, signatura (sig.) I/1, i.č. 548, karton (k.) 118, 'Komplexní plán péče o pracující v n.p. Svit na léta 1972–1975'.

42. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 548, k. 118, 'Zpráva o průběžném plnění Komplexního plánu péče o pracující v n.p. Svit na léta 1972–1975'.

43. See, for example, MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 553, k. 120, 'Realizace plánu kádrové a sociální politiky ve VHJ ČOP v roce 1972 a zabezpečení dalšího rozvoje této oblasti, listopad 1972'; MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 584, k. 127, 'Realisace plánu kádrové, personální a sociální politiky v podniku v roce 1972 a zabezpečení dalšího rozvoje v této oblasti, porada vedení 22.1.1973'; MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 636, k. 140, 'Zpráva o plnění úkolů sociální politiky s ohledem na stabilizaci pracovníků n.p. Svit, porada vedení 17.6.1974'; MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 636, k. 140, 'Zpráva o vývoji úrazovosti a chorob z povolání na úseku bezpečnosti a hygieny práce za rok 1973, 2.4.1974'.

44. On the negative effects of labour shortages, see MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 532, k. 115, 'Zpráva o vývoji na úseku bezpečnosti práce, psychologie, sociologie a hygieny za rok 1970'.

45. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 657, k. 148, 'Informativní zpráva o výsledcích mimořádných opatření k zabezpečení stabilizace pracovních sil s ohledem na potřeby n.p. Svit v r. 1975, pro poradu vedení 24. 3. 1975'. The report stated that an important reason for labour shortages was the departure of women on maternity leave as a result of the state's population growth policy.

46. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 769, k. 180, 'Rozbor příčin dlouhodobého úbytku výrobních dělníků v n.p. Svit Gottwaldov (projednávání materiálu na zasedání ekonomické komise OV KS), 30.10.1979'.

47. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 856, k. 204, 'Analýza příčin odchodů pracovníků z o.p. Svit a opatření k prohloubení stabilizace kmenových pracovníků, porada vedení 21. 6. 1989'.

48. The largest number of 'guest workers' came from Vietnam, Cuba, Angola and Mongolia. In 1989, Svit employed 1111 foreigners, most of whom were Vietnamese. See MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. Národní podnik Svit

Gottwaldov, sig. I/1, i.č. 856, k. 204, 'Koncepce postupného omezování počtu zahraničních pracovníků ve státním podniku, porada vedení 20.11.1989'. For research on Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia, see A. Alamgir, 'Recalcitrant Women: Internationalism and the Redefinition of Welfare Limits in the Czechoslovak-Vietnamese Labor Exchange Program, 1967–1989', *Slavic Review*, vol. 73, no. 1 (2014), pp. 133–55; and A. Alamgir, 'Race Is Elsewhere: State-socialist ideology and the racialisation of Vietnamese workers in Czechoslovakia', *Race & Class*, vol. 54, no. 4 (2014), pp. 67–85.

49. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 493, k. 401, 'Hodnocení politicko-ekonomické situace v průmyslových organizacích (měsíční zprávy), 1985'; and MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 493, k. 402, 'Hodnocení politicko ekonomické situace v průmyslových organizacích (měsíční zprávy, duben-prosinec), 1986'.

50. See MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 415, 'Informace o postojích a názorech v organizacích sdružených v Národní frontě, 1983–1984'; and MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 345, 'Souhrnné informace o politické situaci v okrese, 1980–1987'.

51. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i. č. 501, 'Zpráva o zásobování textilním a koženým zbožím na vybraných prodejnách za 2. čtvrtletí 1983 z 24. června 1983'.

52. See M. Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat: ekologie v českých zemích v letech 1968 až 1989* (Prague, 1996).

53. On the handling of environmental issues in the Gottwaldov district in the 1970s and 1980s, see J. Daněk, 'Problematika ochrany životního prostředí na Gottwaldovsku v kontextu československé normalizační politiky', MA Dissertation, Palacký University, Olomouc, 2020.

54. MZA – SOkA Zlín, f. OV KSČ, i.č. 503, 'Ze zasedání OV KSČ Gottwaldov 28.6.1989: Dosažené výsledky v ochraně životního prostředí v zemědělství, průmyslu, u podniků služeb, národních výborů, složek Národní fronty v okrese Gottwaldov a hlavní úkoly v této oblasti pro 9. pětiletku'.

55. Daněk, 'Problematika ochrany', pp. 57–84.

56. For this positive image of Slušovice, see S. Vácha, *Jak řídí Slušovice* (Prague, 1988).

57. The machine tool works (ZPS) continue to operate as well as the production of tyres in the Barum company in Otrokovice (Barum was purchased by the German company Continental in 1992). Recently, one of the most important employers in the city is the Tomáš Baťa University (a public university established in 2001).

Friendship Under Occupation: Soviet-Czechoslovak Relations and Everyday Life after the 1968 Invasion

Rachel Applebaum

In the winter of 1971–1972, the Soviet House of Science and Culture in Prague hosted a series of festivities to 'educate children in the glorious traditions of proletarian internationalism'. Two thousand young Czechs came to the building in groups of 150 to 200 for special celebrations, complete with a Soviet New Year's tree. The children had the opportunity to admire the tree, decorated with Russian toys, and they received gifts from the USSR. Students from the Soviet embassy's school in Prague also attended. The celebrations were organised by the embassy and the House

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of Culture and were supported by the Czechoslovak state, including the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship (SČSP), the Ministry of Education and the Committee of Youth. The organisers hoped that the festivities, in addition to winning Czech children over to the cause of friendship with the Soviet Union, would not 'fail to make a definite impression on [their] parents'. Soviet officials judged the New Year's celebrations a great success.[1]

While the Soviet House of Culture was hosting the New Year's festivities in Prague, the Soviet Army was maintaining roughly 75,000 troops in garrisons across Czechoslovakia.[2] The contrast between the children's party and the military occupation is jarring, but the juxtaposition between soft and hard power had characterised Soviet-Czechoslovak relations since the end of World War II. In the post-war years, Soviet and Czechoslovak officials had sought to bolster the political alliance between their countries by fostering 'friendship' between their citizens. In order to accomplish this goal, they established a vast network of transnational contacts between ordinary citizens in the realm of everyday life. What I call the 'friendship project' came to include cultural relations; a variety of interpersonal connections, including student exchanges, membership in friendship societies, pen-pal correspondences and tourism; as well as the trade of consumer goods. The friendship project succeeded in shaping the most intimate aspects of people's lives in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, influencing everything from what they wore to where they travelled to whom they married.

Logically, the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 should have sounded the death knell for the friendship project. The violence of the invasion blatantly belied the past two decades of propaganda about transnational camaraderie. Czechoslovaks furiously protested the Kremlin's actions by demonstrating in the streets, defacing Soviet World War II monuments and coordinating a year-long boycott of Soviet films.[3] Yet despite their efforts, as this chapter will show, the friendship project ultimately survived the invasion and came to play a central role in the two decades of 'normalisation' that followed.

Immediately after the invasion, the Soviet government made re-establishing the friendship project a priority. Soviet officials employed tourism, friendship societies and even their occupying troops to restore relations with the satellite state. Beginning in April 1969, when Leonid Brezhnev forced Alexander Dubček to resign from his position as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) and appointed

Gustáv Husák to take his place, the Soviet and Czechoslovak leaderships worked together to use the friendship project to rebuild their political and military alliance. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Czechoslovak citizens participated in this friendship project—regardless of whether they believed in it—by travelling to the USSR as tourists, studying the Russian language in school and consuming Soviet products. The maintenance of the rituals of mutual friendship thus became an inescapable aspect of everyday life in normalised Czechoslovakia, despite Czechoslovaks' widespread antipathy towards the Soviet Union.

In studies of communist Czechoslovakia, normalisation is usually understood as a domestic policy put in place by Husák's government to return the country to the pre-1968 status quo. Normalisation entailed scaling back Dubček's reforms and purging the KSČ and other state organisations of his most ardent backers. Normalisation has also become a synonym for the last two decades of communist rule in Czechoslovakia.[4] Yet as this chapter will show, normalisation had yet another function: it was a transnational policy designed to restore the Soviet-Czechoslovak alliance in both countries to its pre-1968 vigour, along with the friendship project that supported it. From the beginning of the post-war period, friendship between the USSR and Czechoslovakia was part of a more far-reaching Soviet strategy to create a transnational socialist community. During normalisation Soviet and Czechoslovak officials understood the friendship project between their citizens as essential to maintaining the integrity of the broader socialist world.

Normalising Friendship

In June 1969, members of the KSČ's Presidium took stock of what they viewed as the massive damage the Prague Spring had caused the party and Czechoslovak society. In particular, they worried about the harm the reform movement had inflicted on the friendship project:

> Most dangerous is the appearance of the growth of anti-Sovietism in various forms. This is a mass phenomenon and has hit all strata of the population, including part of the membership of the party. Especially serious is the situation with youth, the intelligentsia and school children.[5]

In reality, it was the Soviet invasion, not the Prague Spring, which caused the greatest damage to the friendship project. For example, during the

Prague Spring the leaders of the SČSP, the most important organisation in Czechoslovakia for advancing friendship with the Soviet Union, boasted of its ability to remain popular at a time when other mass bodies in the country, such as the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (ČSM) and the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (ROH), were in disarray. In 1968, the SČSP had 1.5 million members.[6] But when Warsaw Pact tanks entered Czechoslovakia, the friendship society nearly collapsed.[7] Its chairman, Zdeněk Fierlinger, personally told Soviet representatives he thought the invasion had been a mistake, accusing them of having 'sent half a million soldiers to put down a counter-revolution that didn't exist'.[8] The SČSP's rank-and-file members demonstrated their anger at the Soviet Union by turning in their membership cards en masse.[9] The local branch in Ústí-nad-Labem 'was virtually paralysed': all nine of its 'collective' institutional members resigned, as did the majority of its individual members. Even the custodian and driver at the branch's headquarters quit.[10] In Gottwaldov (Zlín)—also discussed by Vítězslav Sommer in his contribution to this volume—membership in the SČSP plunged from 18,000 to 2000.[11] To add to the SČSP's woes, the editors of its journal, *Svět sovětů* (World of the Soviets), which had played a central role in promoting friendship with the USSR and which in 1967 boasted a circulation of 300,000, refused to continue publishing after the invasion.[12] The editor, who Soviet colleagues described as a 'good communist', defended the journal's actions by explaining: 'The arrival of Soviet troops aroused a natural feeling of protest'.[13]

Contacts between the SČSP and its sister organisation in the USSR, the Union of Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship (OSChD), also broke down after the invasion. The OSChD had been founded in Moscow in 1958 to promote Czechoslovak culture in the USSR. Between 21 August 1968 and the beginning of September the two friendship societies stopped exchanging delegations and even corresponding with one another. The OSChD responded to this breakdown in contact by temporarily reframing its mission to explain to the Soviet people their government's decision to invade Czechoslovakia, and to try and support 'healthy forces within the SČSP' working to 'normalise the political situation in the ČSSR'. A week after the invasion, the Dinamo factory in Moscow celebrated the 24th anniversary of the 1944 Slovak uprising against Nazi Germany. On 6 September, the House of Unions in Moscow hosted a memorial event in honour of Julius Fučík, the KSČ member who was executed by the Nazis in 1943 for his work in the resistance to the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. The

OSChD intended these events to have a transnational impact: they hoped Czechoslovaks would learn of them and realise that the Soviet people harboured no ill-will towards their Central European friends.[14]

The crisis in the SČSP following the invasion, combined with a rash of anti-Soviet activity in Czechoslovakia—including widespread attacks on World War II-era memorials to the Red Army, street protests, boycotts of Soviet movies, and screenings in cinemas across the country of short films with anti-Soviet messages—forced Moscow officials and their Czechoslovak supporters to quickly develop a plan to 'normalise' relations between their countries. On 30 August, under Soviet pressure, the Czechoslovak government created the Office for the Press, Radio and Television with the aim of re-establishing censorship in the country. This move drastically curtailed the media's authority to critique Czechoslovakia's relations with the USSR. The Czechoslovak media was forbidden 'to use the word "occupier" or "occupation", criticise the Warsaw Pact countries or their Communist Parties, attack their troops on Czechoslovak territory, or write about the victims or damages caused by the military intervention'.[15] In October, the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments signed an agreement that allowed the USSR to 'temporarily' station troops in the country. The treaty effectively amounted to an official Czechoslovak sanction of the invasion and helped to stabilise the political situation.[16]

Yet the pressing question remained of 'how to win the hearts and minds of the Czechs', as the Soviet Politburo phrased it.[17] The method the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments chose for this inauspicious task was a familiar one: they employed cultural, interpersonal and commercial contacts between their citizens to rebuild their countries' alliance. Even as Soviet Army tanks remained in Czechoslovak cities, the two leaderships thus tried to reaffirm the friendship project according to the template they had developed over the course of the post-war period.

Why did both Soviet officials and Czechoslovaks who supported the goals of normalisation stubbornly cling to the tenets of the friendship project after the violence and enmity of the invasion? Were they cynical, naive or simply lacking imagination? There are four possible explanations. First, Soviet functionaries' dogged attachment to the traditional rituals of friendship politics speaks to the cynicism at the heart of Soviet policy in Czechoslovakia, where rhetoric about transnational friendship had from the early post-war years served to sugarcoat imperialist aims. Second, this attachment was connected with utopian aspirations for international relations in the socialist world that had first developed after Stalin's death in

1953 and then reached their apex during the Prague Spring. In the 1950s and 1960s, Soviet and Czechoslovak communists had come to believe that the more intimately their citizens got to know each other, the closer the two nations would become: they maintained that personal ties between citizens could transcend national differences. This notion remained powerful even after the invasion.

Third, if, as Kieran Williams has suggested, 'normalization is primarily about restoring extreme predictability', then efforts to revive the friendship project seem less surprising.[18] Normalisation was an antidote to the experimentation and tumult of the Prague Spring. It was a policy that was meant to be uninventive—an attempt to ignore recent history, to turn back the clock to a more static and predictable era of Soviet-Czechoslovak relations.

A final explanation concerns the realm of international affairs. From its inception, the Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship project had been shaped by tensions between the superpowers: it was designed to aid the creation of a cohesive socialist community that would counteract the capitalist West. After the invasion, the Brezhnev and Husák governments framed the Prague Spring in Cold War terms: they portrayed the reform movement as a plot by the Soviet Union's Western enemies to kidnap the formerly loyal satellite state from the socialist world and transform it into a member of the capitalist camp. This was the message of a 'documentary' film the Soviet government commissioned about the Prague Spring in 1969, *Czechoslovakia: Year of Trial* (*Chekhoslovakiia, god ispytanii*, dir. Anatolii Koloshin), which was shown in the USSR and the ČSSR.[19] The film posited a parallel between what it claimed were Western designs on Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the German annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938.[20] In internal discussions in spring 1969, the KSČ also described the Prague Spring as a vast Western-sponsored assault on Czechoslovak society, involving the American, British and French embassies, foreign broadcasting, foreign correspondents and tourists.[21] The KSČ singled out the West's use of cultural diplomacy and other forms of soft power in the Cold War—including the West German policy of *Ostpolitik*—as an attempt to undermine transnational relations in the socialist world. Czechoslovak and Soviet officials believed that Western efforts to woo Czechoslovak citizens with soft power could only be offset by cultural and interpersonal diplomacy between the socialist countries. They wagered that by reviving the friendship project, they would ensure the survival of the larger socialist community.

From Soldiers to Samaritans

As the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments revived the friendship project after the invasion, they drew largely on methods they had developed over the course of the post-war period: they renewed Soviet cultural exports to Czechoslovakia; they reinstated mass tourism between their countries; they resuscitated Czechoslovakia's friendship organisations and publications; and they tried to re-impose the pre-1968 mythology of the Red Army's liberation of Czechoslovakia in World War II, which focused on the benevolence and self-sacrifice of Soviet troops. The Soviet government, however, pioneered one significant strategy for the post-invasion version of the friendship project: it drafted its soldiers in Czechoslovakia to make friends with the people they were occupying.

A mere two weeks after the invasion, Soviet officials from the Central Committee's Department of Agitation and Propaganda proposed inviting Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia to engage in what might be termed outreach work to local communities. They suggested that Soviet generals and officers should give presentations to the Czechoslovak Army and the civilian population explaining the USSR's justification for the invasion. They recommended organising meetings with Czechoslovaks who had served in the Red Army during World War II to broaden support for Moscow's actions. Among the benign activities the department recommended Soviet troops could employ to improve relations with Czechoslovaks were assisting with the harvest in rural areas, repairing locals' broken down cars, as well as engaging youth in sports matches and chess games, accompanied by exchanges of badges and souvenirs.[22] Soviet soldiers were thus not only supposed to prevent 'counter-revolutionary activity' in Czechoslovakia; they were also to serve as good Samaritans to the local populace.

Why would the Soviet leadership make this highly risky move to recast its forces as 'friends' of the Czech and Slovak people? Marie Černá argues that the Soviets' attempts to establish amicable ties between their soldiers and Czechoslovak civilians should be seen as part of the USSR's larger endeavour to rewrite the history of the Prague Spring and the invasion during normalisation.[23] Much as psychotherapists believe that victims of trauma need to develop a narrative explaining their suffering in order to heal, Soviet authorities believed that in order to restore order in Czechoslovakia they had to work in tandem with the new government in Prague to explain the extraordinary events of 1968. As Paulina Bren writes, 'they demanded a retelling of the Prague Spring that would serve

as the official collective memory of 1968 as well as an ideological launching pad of normalisation'.[24] Official Soviet and Czechoslovak accounts maintained that the Prague Spring had constituted a 'counter-revolution', not a reform movement, and that by crushing it the Soviet Army was a 'saviour' not an occupying force.[25] Directing troops to play soccer and chess with local youth was thus an effort to convince the Czechoslovak people that this new official narrative was correct: that the Soviet Army was indeed a 'friend', not an 'occupier'.

Soviet troops' 'friendly' overtures to the Czechoslovak populace were also directed at their compatriots back home in the USSR. While normalisation is usually portrayed primarily as a domestic policy in Czechoslovakia, it was in fact a transnational project that was also directed at the Soviet people. Following the invasion, the Soviet government not only faced the task of restoring good will with Czechoslovakia, it also had to convince its own citizens that the friendship project remained viable. This was important because socialist internationalism continued to play a central role in Soviet ideology. The USSR could not afford to appear as an occupier to its own people, since it had been founded explicitly as an anti-imperialist state. According to Soviet ideology, only imperialists could be occupiers. Yet the task of persuading the Soviet people that Czechoslovaks remained committed to the friendship project was threatened by events on the ground. In the first few months after the invasion, in every city Soviet troops occupied in Czechoslovakia they encountered crowds of angry locals who wanted to argue about the invasion. Moscow struggled to contain the fallout from these unscripted confrontations. Soviet propagandists reported anxiously in autumn 1968:

> Literally every tank or armoured transporter positioned in Czechoslovak population centres has been turned into a space for lively discussions, in which every day more and more Czechoslovaks take part, including young workers, university students and high school pupils from the upper grades.[26]

For Soviet officials, these unwelcome events inspired fears about ideological contamination among the troops and the transmission of 'counter-revolutionary' ideas back to the USSR. During a one month period between October and November 1968, for instance, the KGB confiscated up to 100 letters a day that Soviet troops had attempted to mail home, containing 'anti-Soviet and anti-socialist publications that have fallen into their hands, photographs of anti-Soviet slogans and other politically

harmful material, the goal of which is clearly to corroborate the situation they have encountered'.27 The transmission of such 'anti-Soviet material' to the USSR threatened to directly contradict the Soviet government's official explanation of its military activity in Czechoslovakia, which was that the Czechoslovak people had invited Soviet soldiers to their country to protect them from 'counter-revolutionaries' directed by the West.

To counteract Soviet troops' descriptions of their clashes with angry Czechoslovaks, Moscow instructed the editors of the USSR's leading newspapers to 'expand positive information about the life of Czechoslovak workers', in order to 'unmask anti-socialist and anti-Soviet pronouncements', and to publish interviews with Soviet Army soldiers showing that they were working in cooperation with local organisations.28 In other words, it was just as important for Moscow to create an official narrative about the invasion for public consumption in the USSR, as it was in Czechoslovakia. The Kremlin remained intent on depicting its hegemony in Czechoslovakia through the lens of friendship. Accounts in the Soviet press, such as an article in *Izvestiia* in October 1968, which portrayed Soviet soldiers as selflessly assisting Czechoslovak farmers with the harvest, were thus intended to convince the Soviet people of the righteousness of their army's actions and of the positive prospects for continuing the Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship project.29 The 'friendly' relationship between Soviet troops and Czechoslovak civilians became a central trope of propaganda in normalised Czechoslovakia, especially in regions where the Soviet Army was garrisoned.30 But this trope also had a transnational message aimed at the Soviet public.

Friendship and the Social Contract

During normalisation, the Czechoslovak government promoted friendship with the USSR as a means to simultaneously foster what it described as 'socialist patriotism and internationalism'.31 This dual and seemingly contradictory effort involved convincing Czechoslovak citizens that the security of their country—and the sanctity of their private lives—was dependent on the maintenance of cultural, interpersonal and commercial contacts with the Soviet Union. The Czechoslovak leadership therefore strove to present friendship with the USSR as inevitable and inviolable. It thus implicitly attacked the arguments the Prague Spring reformers had made about the inherent historical and cultural differences between the two countries, and the need for each to pursue its own political path. 'To

like and dislike the same things is indeed true friendship', the KSČ daily newspaper *Rudé právo* claimed in May 1970, when Prague and Moscow signed a new treaty of 'friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance'.[32]

One of the key steps Husák's government took in 1969 to restore order was to institute political screenings for members of the KSČ, the intelligentsia, ideological activists and journalists. These people were called before party commissions and interrogated about their activities during the Prague Spring and their attitudes towards the 'fraternal assistance' of the Soviet Army in August 1968 and subsequent normalisation. The screening process effectively functioned as a way for the state to create a new healthier socialist community, untainted by the upheavals of 1968–1969. Those who refused to condemn the Prague Spring and to pledge their loyalty to normalisation were expelled from the party or fired from their positions. Between 1969 and 1972, 653 oppositionists were sent to prison.[33]

Bren has stressed the performative side of these screenings, suggesting 'the purge forced citizens into dialogue with the regime' and thus helped to legitimise it.[34] Less well known is the fact that normalisation also compelled—or at least highly incentivised—the Czechoslovak people to re-engage in the friendship project, thus formally re-legitimising it. Scholars have argued that the majority of Czechoslovaks acquiesced to Husák's counter-reforms because they saw little chance of successfully resisting 500,000 troops, and because they desired a return to peace, calm and ordinary life after the upheaval caused by the invasion.[35] Maintaining and participating in the friendship project became a way of ensuring this peace and permitted Czechoslovaks to prove their loyalty to the Husák government as citizens of their country, and as citizens of the broader socialist world.

During the 1970s, the regime and society worked out a type of social contract whereby the state provided the people with security and material benefits in exchange for their political conformity. Involvement in the friendship project became one of the means by which the Czechoslovak population fulfilled its side of this social contract. Writing in the late 1970s, the Czech dissident Milan Šimečka argued that the state required Czechoslovaks to 'manifest their public assent [for the Husák regime], march on May Day, pay their subscription to the Soviet Friendship Society, raise their hands at meetings and sign resolutions'.[36] In an interview with the historians Miroslav Vaněk and Pavel Mücke from the early 2000s, a

Czech woman recalled how her husband had to join the SČSP during normalisation in order for their son to be admitted to an agricultural high school.[37] In return for these demonstrations of support for their own government and the Soviet Union, the Husák regime offered Czechoslovaks not only one of the highest standards of living in the Eastern bloc, but the time and space for 'self-actualisation': for family life, hobbies and relaxation.[38] In the 1970s and 1980s, participation in the friendship project became a routine and nearly inescapable aspect of everyday life in Czechoslovakia: from the consumption of Soviet canned goods and technology, to involvement in various forms of cultural exchange with the USSR.[39] A new journal promoting friendship with the USSR, called *Svět socialismu* (The World of Socialism) replaced *Svět sovětů*. Each year, tens of thousands of Czechoslovaks travelled to the Soviet Union as tourists and attended Soviet performances in Czechoslovakia.[40] By 1977, the SČSP had 2.24 million members—a roughly 50% increase from the pre-invasion period.[41] 'Whoever was not a member of the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship was a nobody', a former member of the organisation recalled in a 2009 documentary on Czech television.[42]

The Obligatory Language of Friendship

Dear Nina!
     Many thanks for your letter, in which you answered all my questions. Don't be angry that I haven't written to you for so long. You cannot imagine how busy we are. We—that is our class and the entire school—are preparing to celebrate the holiday of the Great October Revolution and to take part in the Month of Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship.[43]

This chummy letter, signed 'Your Jana', purported to be from a Czech teenager to her Soviet pen-pal. In fact, the letter was a lesson in a 1983 Russian-language textbook for eighth grade students in Czechoslovakia. The lesson illustrates how the obligatory study of the Russian language in Czechoslovak schools during normalisation became a key tool that the Czechoslovak and Soviet governments employed to maintain the friendship project.

The study of Russian in Czechoslovakia had served as an important component of the friendship project from the very beginning of the postwar period. In autumn 1945, Czechoslovakia's National Front coalition government established Russian as a compulsory subject in the country's

schools.[44] In 1949, following the communist coup, the KSČ founded a network of 'People's Russian Courses' (*Lidové kursy ruštiny*, LKR) to teach the language to adults. Over the next ten years 2.6 million Czechoslovaks attended these courses.[45] Throughout the communist era in Czechoslovakia, the purpose of Russian instruction for both children and adults was explicitly ideological. The vocabulary students learned, the texts they read—even the illustrations in the textbooks they used—were designed to teach them about socialism and to bolster the friendship project.

By the mid-1960s, Czechoslovak children and their parents began to chafe at Russian's obligatory status in schools and to campaign for opportunities to learn English, French and German instead. They criticised unenthusiastic teachers, rote lesson plans and the Russian language's imbrication in stultified friendship propaganda. During the Prague Spring, *Svět sovětů* portrayed children's experiences learning Russian in schools as a trajectory of disillusionment:

> The new language, which first aroused curiosity…, has tended to become muffled by time-consuming explanations [and] little opportunity to hear it in its unadulterated natural form (*znění*). Later come the grammatical formulas, the cramming of vocabulary of the masculine, feminine and neuter genders, the model of this and that, the mechanical recitation: here is the blackboard, that is the second conjugation, Vera goes to the movies, the pioneers are fighting for peace. Why do we study Russian? It is the language of our friends.[46]

Following the invasion, some teachers in Czechoslovakia initially protested by refusing to teach the language.[47] Yet instead of putting an end to Russian's obligatory status, the Soviet and Czechoslovak authorities doubled down on their efforts to disseminate the language. Normalisation coincided with the height of an ambitious Soviet drive to promote Russian as a form of soft power around the world, in the socialist bloc, in the capitalist camp and in the 'developing countries'.[48] In 1973, the Soviet Ministry of Higher Education called the promotion of Russian abroad 'the most important means of the propaganda of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the achievements of the USSR in the realms of the economy [and] culture and the expansion of friendly ties between the Soviet Union and other countries'.[49] The significance of learning Russian became omnipresent in Czechoslovak propaganda during normalisation. Each year, half a

million Czechoslovak school children participated in the Pushkin Monument competition (the largest contest in the ČSSR), by reciting works of Russian and Soviet literature in the original language.[50] Russian courses were also broadcast on Czechoslovak television.[51]

According to Czechoslovak party functionaries, the goal of Russian instruction was not simply for their compatriots to learn to communicate in a foreign language, but to develop 'socialist consciousness'.[52] The Russian language textbooks Czechoslovak students used in school during normalisation were designed to instill this consciousness by teaching them about life in the Soviet Union and the friendship project. Some of the lessons in these textbooks were explicitly political: children learned, for example, about the birth of baby Lenin and the 1945 'liberation' of Czechoslovakia by the Red Army: 'The glorious Soviet Army brought us freedom. On 9 May 1945 it liberated Prague and all of Czechoslovakia'.[53] An eighth-grade Russian language textbook published in Czechoslovakia in 1983 contained numerous short readings and dialogues about Soviet pioneer organisations, how to celebrate the October Revolution and about associations at Czechoslovak schools for fostering solidarity with the USSR, including the SČSP and Clubs of International Friendship. The textbook likewise touted the recent construction of the Prague metro as 'a building site of friendship' between the two countries.[54] Other lessons introduced students to life in the Soviet Union more broadly, highlighting socialist modernity and traditional Russian folk customs. Czechoslovak pupils read texts in Russian about Soviet space exploration, the construction of houses of culture and universities in the Soviet countryside, as well as about Russian nesting dolls and folk dances.[55]

The Russian language textbooks used in Czechoslovak schools during normalisation were also intended to prepare students for real-life interactions with their Soviet peers. The 1983 textbook for Czechoslovak eighth graders informed them: 'Kids, this school year during our Russian lessons we will speak Russian a lot. When you meet Soviet comrades, you will put your knowledge of the language into practice'.[56] And indeed, during normalisation thousands of Czechoslovak children did attend Russian language summer camps alongside members of the Soviet *Komsomol*, the communist youth organisation.[57] The children of Soviet military personnel stationed in Czechoslovakia also visited local schools to help their Czechoslovak peers with their Russian language skills.[58] In interviews conducted in the Czech Republic after 1989, subjects often mentioned how they had disliked having to study Russian.[59] However, despite widespread

antipathy towards Russian in normalised Czechoslovakia, the language became an important and inescapable conduit for the maintenance of the friendship project.

The Song of the Tree and the Rose

In the late 1970s, a Soviet engineer arrives in Prague. He is in his early fifties, still handsome, but visibly exhausted. He has been invited to the Czechoslovak capital to assist with the construction of the city's new metro system: his expertise is required to build a tunnel under the Vltava river connecting the city's Old Town with the Lesser Town. As soon as the engineer steps off the plane at Prague's Ruzyně airport, it becomes clear that this will be no ordinary business trip: he has a flashback to a wartime scene in the city's streets, where a bomb has exploded. The engineer has come to Prague not only to build the metro, but to resolve a personal issue from his past.

The scene described above comes from a 1978 Czechoslovak film by Ladislav Rychman, *The Song of the Tree and the Rose* (*Píseň o stromu a růži*). In the film, the legendary Soviet actor Viacheslav Tikhonov plays the engineer, Vladimir Kuznetsov, who is also a veteran of the Red Army's liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945. The film tells two stories: the first is a conventionally heroic socialist labour narrative about the completion of the metro tunnel, thanks to Kuznetsov's expertise, with long industrial sequences accompanied by dramatic violin music. The second is a much more melancholy, personal narrative. It turns out that Kuznetsov has come to Prague not only on a mission of labour, but on a mission of the heart: he is looking for Věra, a Czech schoolteacher he fell in love with as a young soldier during the liberation.

The Song of the Tree and the Rose, produced as pro-Soviet propaganda in Czechoslovakia, is also a remarkably revealing document about the limits of the friendship project during normalisation. The film portrays Soviet-Czechoslovak amity in the late 1970s as emotionally fraught, weighed down by the burden of history, and as surprisingly ambiguous. The story about the construction of the metro tunnel depicts the concord between the USSR and Czechoslovakia as mutually beneficial and inviolable. By contrast, the narrative about Kuznetsov's search for his long-lost Czech love conveys the underlying frustrations and fragility of this friendship.

In the film, the metro construction headquarters tasks Lenka Panková, a secretary in her early twenties (played by Jelena Šebestová) with showing

Kuznetsov around Prague. At first she is annoyed by this assignment: in a conversation with her mother she refers to Kuznetsov dismissively as 'some Russian' and she worries that his visit will interrupt her time with her boyfriend, a building worker on the metro project who moonlights as a jazz musician. Soon, however, Lenka develops a crush on Kuznetsov, thanks to his courtly manners, world-weary air and ability to speak fluent Czech. When she learns he is looking for Věra, she eagerly tries to help. She succeeds in tracking down the Czech nurse who cared for Kuznetsov in a Prague hospital after he was injured in battle, and she finds the Czech resistance fighter who had convalesced in the bed next to him. She even manages to locate Věra's last known address by speaking with the administrator of the school where she had taught in 1946. Yet when she and Kuznetsov go to the address, they find that the apartment building has been demolished as part of the metro construction project. Věra remains literally out of reach. The friendship project's technical achievements have inadvertently destroyed its human side.

The Czech semiologist Vladimír Macura has argued that the film portrays the construction of the Prague metro as a sequel to the 1945 Soviet liberation of Czechoslovakia.[60] But even as the film conveys a triumphant message about technical cooperation between the superpower and satellite, its message about Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship is far more ambivalent. In *The Song of the Tree and the Rose*, Tikhonov's character has two failed Czech romances. The first was with Věra in 1945, which is magnified by his inability to find her over three decades later. The second is with Lenka, whom he ultimately concludes is a poor match because of their insurmountable age difference. 'There is a wise old proverb, "don't attach a rose to an old tree"', he tells her. The film's ultimate inadvertent message is that while the official side of Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship, symbolised by the countries' cooperation in building the Prague metro in the 1970s, is strong, the intimate personal side of friendship has been irrevocably damaged by the ravages of time.

Friendship in a Time of Occupation

In May 1970, the Czechoslovak government signed a treaty of 'friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance' with the Soviet Union. This was the third such treaty the two countries had concluded since 1943, and it represented their formal commitment to normalisation. *Rudé právo* devoted an entire edition to the agreement and friendship with the USSR. Alongside

the text of the treaty, the newspaper published transcripts of speeches by dignitaries and appeals of friendship to the Soviet people by Czechoslovak workers. The edition also included reviews of Andrei Konchalovsky's movie of Ivan Turgenev's novel *Nest of the Gentry*, and of a documentary film about the Soviet ballerina, Maya Plisetskaya.[61] The newspaper thus demonstrated the extent to which hard and soft power remained intertwined in the friendship project.

In 1968, the Soviet government had hoped that not only would its troops in Czechoslovakia put an end to Dubček's heretical reforms, but that they would quell the groundswell of anti-Soviet sentiment that had accompanied them. Instead, the spectre of Soviet tanks moving through the streets of Prague and other Czechoslovak cities exacerbated anti-Soviet attitudes among ordinary Czechoslovak citizens and resulted in the biggest crisis in the history of the friendship project. Scenes of unarmed Czechs and Slovaks angrily confronting Soviet tanks became some of the most iconic images of the Cold War.

The invasion was thus the biggest crisis in the friendship project. Yet, unexpectedly, the project endured. The Soviet government and its allies in Czechoslovakia turned to the well-known rituals of friendship to restore relations between their countries, including tourism, the trade of consumer goods and the obligatory study of Russian in Czechoslovak schools. They also employed one new tactic of friendship by drafting Soviet troops to socialise with the very people they were occupying. For the next two decades, the USSR and Czechoslovakia remained committed to maintaining an alliance that relied not only on political and military ties, but on personal, cultural and commercial contacts.

Yet as the film *The Song of the Tree and the Rose* unwittingly reveals, the version of the friendship project that developed during normalisation lacked the optimism and intimacy that had characterised it before the invasion. Friendship between the two countries did indeed become normalised in the 1970s and 1980s, in that it continued to be an inescapable part of Czechoslovak and Soviet citizens' everyday lives. Yet this friendship was no longer in the service of something greater: the construction of a new utopian political system, or the creation of a new role for ordinary citizens in socialist international diplomacy. Instead, the friendship project exposed, more than ever before, the incongruity between violence and affection in the Soviet empire of friends.

Notes

1. All quotes in this paragraph are from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) f. 9576, op. 4, d. 427, l. 240. The assessment of the event's success is in GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 478, l. 214.

2. During negotiations held in Moscow in October 1968, the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments agreed that the USSR would keep between 70–80,000 troops in Czechoslovakia. See Document no. 131, 'Stenographic Account of Soviet-Czechoslovak Negotiations in Moscow, October 3–4, 1968 (Excerpts)', in J. Navrátil et al. (eds), *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest, 1998), p. 528. On 16 October 1968, the two governments signed a 'temporary' treaty ratifying the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia. See Document no. 133, 'Bilateral Treaty on the "Temporary Presence of Soviet Forces on Czechoslovak Territory", October 16, 1968', in ibid., p. 533. When the USSR began to withdraw its troops from Czechoslovakia in February 1990, there were 73,500 Soviet soldiers in the country. See J. Pazderka, 'Samozřejmě, že to v člověku vzbuzuje lítost. Rozhovor s generálem Eduardem Vorobjovem', in J. Pazderka, *Invaze 1968: Ruský pohled* (Prague, 2011), p. 56.

3. For more information on these forms of protest, see R. Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca, NY, 2019), pp. 170–80.

4. On the use of the term 'normalisation' in the immediate post-invasion period, see H. G. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1976), p. 802; and K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath: Czechoslovak Politics, 1968–1970* (Cambridge, 1997). On 'normalisation' as a term denoting the 1970s and 1980s in Czechoslovakia, see P. Bren, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall… Is the West the Fairest of Them All? Czechoslovak Normalization and its (Dis)Contents', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 9, no. 4 (2008), pp. 831–54; P. Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY, 2010); and M. Šimečka, *The Restoration of Order: The Normalization of Czechoslovakia, 1969–1976* (London, 1984).

5. Archive of the Institute of Contemporary History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (AÚSD), inv. č. 274, sign. DI/274, k. 7 (Report from the Presidium of the ÚV KSČ on the struggle against anti-communist ideology and propaganda in the ČSSR, 25 June 1969), p. 23.

6. AÚSD, inv. č. 5295, sign Z/S/149, k. 73 (Letter from N. Popova, chairwoman of the Presidium of the Union of Soviet Friendship Societies to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, 22 July 1968). For

statistics on membership of the SČSP, see GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 330a, l. 2.

7. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 330a, l. 2.
8. AÚSD, inv. č. 5371, sign. Z/S/225, k. 73 (Account by I. A. Cherkasov from the Soviet embassy in Prague of a discussion with Fierlinger on 6 September 1968).
9. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 330a, l. 8.
10. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 356, l. 39.
11. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 355, l. 127.
12. On *Svět sovětů*'s circulation, see National Archive of the Czech Republic, f. 1261/1/8 (Ideologická komise KSČ, 1958–1968), sv. 7, a. j. 23, b. 4 (Report by the Ideological Commission of the ÚV KSČ on the current state of the propaganda of socialist internationalism and the USSR in Czechoslovakia, and suggestions for improving it, 14 January 1967), p. 43.
13. AÚSD, inv. č. 5536, sign. Z/S/190, k. 73 (Report by V. Selianov, editor of *Sovetskaia Rossiia,* about a trip to Czechoslovakia in the autumn of 1968, dated 3 March 1969), p. 192.
14. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 330a, ll. 2, 35.
15. M. Černá, 'From "Occupation" to "Friendly Assistance": The "Presence" of Soviet Troops in Czechoslovakia after August 1968', *Hungarian Historical Review*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2015), pp. 114–43 (here p. 123).
16. 'Bilateral Treaty on the "Temporary Presence of Soviet Forces"', in Navrátil, et al. (eds), *Prague Spring 1968*, p. 533.
17. Document No. 135, 'The Soviet Politburo's Assessment of the Lessons of Operation "Danube" and the Tasks Ahead, November 16, 1968', in ibid., p. 551.
18. Williams, *The Prague Spring and Its Aftermath*, p. 41.
19. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 356, l. 40.
20. See https://csdfmuseum.ru/films/91/ (last accessed on 16 April 2018).
21. AÚSD, inv. č. 274, sign. DI/274, k. 7 (Report from the Presidium of the ÚV KSČ on anti-communist ideology and propaganda in the ČSSR, 25 June 1969), pp. 8–15.
22. Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), f. 5, op. 60, d. 37, l. 30.
23. Černá, 'From "Occupation" to "Friendly Assistance"', p. 116.
24. Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, p. 63.
25. Černá, 'From "Occupation" to "Friendly Assistance"', p. 116.
26. RGANI, f. 5, op. 60, d. 19, l. 204.
27. AÚSD, inv. č. 5347, sign. Z/3–201, k. 73 (KGB report to the TsK KPSS, 19 November 1968), p. 125.
28. AÚSD, inv. č. 5266, sign. Z/S/120, k. 7 (Excerpt from TsK KPSS protocol no. 61, 9s, 'On Measures to Normalise the Situation in the ČSSR and

to Improve Soviet-Czechoslovak Relations', 26 November 1968), pp. 194–6.

29. 'Report from Czechoslovakia: Encounters on Route', *Izvestiia*, 2 October 1968, condensed, translated and reprinted in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 23, no. 40 (23 October 1968), p. 5.

30. Černá, 'From "Occupation" to "Friendly Assistance"', p. 133.

31. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 427, l. 48.

32. 'Mít přítele znamená být přítelem', *Rudé právo*, 7 May 1970.

33. Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*, pp. 36–60; the statistic on the number of people sent to prison is on p. 59.

34. Ibid., p. 60.

35. Ibid.; Šimečka, *The Restoration of Order*.

36. Šimečka, *The Restoration of Order*, p. 144.

37. M. Vaněk and P. Mücke (eds), *Velvet Revolutions: An Oral History of Czech Society* (New York, 2016), pp. 113–14.

38. Bren, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall'.

39. On the extent to which the friendship project was entwined with ordinary life in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s, see 'Přátelství na věčné časy', produced by the Czech TV station Retro, first aired on 11 August 2009 (last accessed on 14 March 2018).

40. *Svět socialismu* was founded in autumn 1968 and had a circulation of 142,422 in 1971. From 1973 to 1978, over 1.5 million Czechoslovaks attended concerts by Soviet performers, including several hundred concerts by the musical ensemble of the Central Group of Soviet Forces in Czechoslovakia. From 1972 to 1978, 143,442 Czechoslovaks travelled to the USSR as tourists under the auspices of the SČSP. See GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 1942, ll. 20–4.

41. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 1942, ll. 20–4.

42. 'Přátelství na věčné časy'.

43. V. Cicha et al., *Ruský Jazyk pro 8 Ročnik základní školy* (Prague, 1983), p. 85.

44. GARF, f. 5283, op. 17, d. 423, l. 11.

45. 'Ruština brána do světa', *Ruský jazyk: odborný časopis pro vyučování ruštině na československých školách* (May 1960), pp. 194–6.

46. 'Co bude s ruštinou na škole?', *Svět sovětů*, 16 April 1968, p. 3.

47. AÚSD, inv. č. 5536 Z/S/190, k. 73 (Report by V. Selianov, editor of *Sovetskaia Rossiia*), p. 197.

48. On the origins of the Soviet project to promote Russian abroad, see R. Applebaum, 'The Rise of Russian in the Cold War: How Three Worlds Made a World Language', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2020), pp. 347–70.

49. GARF, f. 6903, op. 32, d. 685, l. 7.

50. For the number of contestants in the Pushkin Monument competition in the same period, see J. Klapka, 'ARS POETICA – Puškinův památník 1966–2011', http://asociacerusistu.cz/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/ARS_POET_sbornik_1966-2011.pdf (last accessed 28 July 2021). On the role of the Pushkin Monument as the largest competition in Czechoslovakia, see http://www.totalita.cz/vysvetlivky/scsp_01.php (last accessed 28 July 2021).

51. 'Využití televizních kursů ruštiny ve školní výuce', *Ruský jazyk* (November 1973), pp. 122–5.

52. GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 427, l. 49.

53. E. Kováčiková et al., *Ruský Jazyk pro 5 Ročnik: experimentální učební text* (Prague, 1978), p. 150.

54. Cicha et al., *Ruský Jazyk pro 8 Ročnik základní* školy, p. 111.

55. On the modernisation of the Soviet countryside, see lesson 9, 'Sel'skoe khoziaistvo', in ibid., pp. 126–7.

56. Ibid., p. 13.

57. In 1977, over 6000 Czechoslovak children attended ninety Russian language summer camps in the ČSSR. See GARF, f. 9576, op. 4, d. 1942, l. 20. On the participation of the Komsomol in these camps, see 'Přátelství na věčné časy'.

58. See footage of a conversation in Russian between a Soviet sixth-grader and her Czech peer at a Czechoslovak school in Mladá Boleslav, in 'Přátelství na věčné časy'.

59. Vaněk and Mücke (eds), *Velvet Revolutions*, p. 76.

60. V. Macura, 'The Metro', in *The Mystification of a Nation: "The Potato Bug," and Other Essays on Czech Culture*, ed. and trans. by H. Pichová and C. Cravens (Madison, WI, 2010), p. 82.

61. 'Turgeněv znovu ve filmu', *Rudé právo*, 7 May 1970; 'Pro milovníky klasického baletu', *Rudé právo*, 7 May 1970.

Normalisation Across Borders: Official Cooperation and Contacts between East Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1969–1980

Matthew Stibbe

From January to October 1980, with Europe and the world in the midst of a new, more tense, phase in the Cold War, the British postgraduate student and *Spectator* columnist Timothy Garton Ash—later an Oxford don and *Guardian* feature-writer—spent several months living in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a visiting research student at Berlin's Humboldt University.[1] Among the many developments he witnessed during that time, seen with his own eyes or through the eyes of the 'ordinary' East German citizens he encountered, one stands out in particular. In autumn 1980, as his stay was coming to an end, the government

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announced that from 30 October it was introducing new travel restrictions for citizens intending to journey to Poland, and likewise for Polish citizens wishing to visit the GDR. This represented a reversal of a previous agreement, coming into force on 1 January 1972, for visa-free travel between the two countries.[2] Now East Germans could only cross into Poland with a visa, which they could only obtain if they had a formal invitation from an official Polish body or a private individual with a verifiable address in the People's Republic of Poland (PRP). In other words, East German citizens could no longer simply travel to Poland as anonymous tourists or shoppers unobserved by the state.[3] Garton Ash, a regular visitor to, and keen watcher of events in Poland as well as East Germany, recorded the reactions of East Berliners to news of the new travel arrangements. In a book published in the West German Federal Republic (FRG) in 1981 he noted:

> Yet again GDR citizens feel, as they did nearly twenty years ago when the Berlin Wall was constructed, that they are being closed off on all sides. 'They have bricked up the last window of our prison', a [Berlin] housewife lamented.[4]

Reading Garton Ash's volume, contemporary Cold War critics of the GDR and its human rights abuses might easily have drawn a linear historical timeline, beginning with the sealing of the inner-German border in 1952 and the violent crushing of the 17 June 1953 people's uprising, moving through the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the ongoing technical modernisation of its barriers, fortifications and watchtowers thereafter, and ending here with the new travel restrictions to Poland in 1980.[5] These restrictions were reminiscent of the 'Stalinist' 1950s and represented an end to the more 'liberal' travel arrangements of the 1970s.[6] However, Garton Ash's point was more differentiated than this, and in fact even more damning of the post-1971 East German regime under Erich Honecker and its unique position inside the Soviet bloc. The '*they*' whom the housewife referred to, he explained, were not the communist rulers of the GDR, but their Polish counterparts, who—in supposedly typical Polish fashion—had allowed chaos to reign by recognising the independent trade union *Solidarność* (Solidarity) under the Gdańsk agreement of 31 August 1980. Soviet military intervention in Poland was now feared, not because it would threaten the newly-won rights of Polish workers, but because it would upset the relative economic and political

stability achieved in East Germany in the 1970s. In the GDR there were no strikes, and even the theoretical right to take industrial action was not recognised. Instead there was a withdrawal into private life.[7] While SED rule was never accepted as 'normal', the 'selfish' political desires of the Poles could not be allowed to interfere with the 'inescapable' need for order across as well as within the borders of the separate socialist nations. 'Normal life', from this every-day, 'non-political' perspective, might also be seen as under threat from 'the Poles' widely decried habit of emptying East German shops of goods unavailable in Polish stores'.[8]

The housewife's comments in turn were presented by Garton Ash as typical of the alleged 'cravenness' [*Subalternität*] of the East German people towards their own state.[9] The GDR of the late 1970s, he argued, was an example of 'mature totalitarianism'.[10] Its rulers kept the population in line less through open terror and labour camps and more through constant surveillance and reliance on a deep-rooted national tendency to respect state authority. These peculiarities helped to explain why East Germany could never be a 'normalised' dictatorship in the same way that János Kádár's Hungary or Gustáv Husák's Czechoslovakia became after 1956 and 1969–1970 respectively. Even the tiny group of dissident ex-communist East German writers who were expelled, or allowed to emigrate, to West Germany in the 1970s were not 'normal' dissidents like Lech Wałęsa or Václav Havel. As renegade former members of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), they were cut off from direct contact with their 'normal' public at 'home', often finding that even the books they had published prior to becoming *persona non grata* could no longer be reprinted for a new generation of East German readers. Yet their unresolved status as 'ex-GDR writers' also meant that they could not successfully 'exit' into a world beyond the communist state project they had left behind.[11] 'Ordinary' West German citizens and, more notably, the radical Marxists of the '1968 generation', were not interested in engaging with them, or in helping them to create a 'better' GDR. This gave them, essentially, just one option: to say nothing in public about their homeland at all, out of fear that any critical remarks would immediately be misinterpreted as a complete renunciation or betrayal of their socialist political heritage.[12]

In the thirty years since its collapse in 1989–1990, Garton Ash's characterisation of the East German dictatorship as a peculiarly insidious example of 'mature totalitarianism' has been challenged from many sides, not least from scholars who look at the various forms of private and public accommodation that ordinary people made with the regime to achieve a degree

of normalisation 'from below'.[13] According to Mark Allinson, much of the new literature has focused on exploring how the GDR's real or imagined '*internal* normality' in the 1970s was negotiated and experienced 'at all levels, from the grassroots to the senior political leadership'.[14] One area that has so far not been examined, however, is the place of Husák's Czechoslovakia in post-1969 visions of what 'normalised' communist rule *across borders* might look like. After all, Garton Ash's housewife was wrong on one point: East Germany was not literally 'walled in' after 1980 because its southern frontier with the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR)—which had also been opened to visa-free traffic from mid-January 1972[15]—remained crossable for the average private GDR tourist throughout the Solidarity crisis and beyond. All that was needed, as Stefan Wolle points out, was a personal ID card, together with an emergency supply of food and a cheap place to stay (as acquiring a sufficient amount of Czechoslovak crowns (*koruna*) before leaving home was not always possible).[16] Indeed, it was only in early October 1989—with thousands of East Germans seeking refuge in the West German embassy in Prague following the temporary closure of the frontier between Austria and Hungary—that travel restrictions on the GDR's border with Czechoslovakia were first seriously considered, and then implemented, by the SED Politburo.[17]

How and to what degree 1970s Czechoslovakia served as a model of socialist normality for East Germany's leaders, or if not a model, then at least a source of cross-border reassurance that communist rule could be strengthened after the crisis of 1968, has so far escaped the attention of scholars of the period. Instead, emphasis has been placed on the growing 'German-ness' of the SED regime from the mid-1960s or its construction of a 'GDR patriotism' rooted in identification with 'nation' and 'homeland' as the essential foundation stone of 'socialist internationalism' and cultural exchange.[18] Garton Ash, for instance, cites a speech made by the Culture Minister Klaus Gysi on 28 August 1968 at the National Theatre in Weimar, the place most commonly associated with German classical humanism. Here Gysi attacked intellectual developments in the ČSSR not just during the Prague Spring, but in the entire period since 1960. In particular he ridiculed attempts by Marxist literary scholars to claim Franz Kafka for the European revolutionary-humanist ideal at a landmark academic conference in Liblice in 1963:

> Which heritage is more suited to furthering our cause? Is it [Goethe's] Faust… who through his actions lays bare the immortal human spirit, [and]

who thus has the historic right to say: 'The traces of my days on earth will remain for eternity'? Or are we better served by Kafka's Gregor Samsa, who awoke one morning from a tumultuous dream to find that he had metamorphosed into a gigantic insect?[19]

However, the problem with this argument is that 1960s/1970s demarcation (*Abgrenzung*) in the sphere of communist high culture and 'national' heritage, although highly significant, did not rule out cross-border cultural exchange in other areas, such as technical education and youth tourism, trade union activity, military/civil defence preparations and—perhaps most tellingly of all—border security itself. Indeed, given the 'shock' of 1968, and the degree of hostility felt in official circles in East Berlin towards the Prague Spring, what is perhaps most surprising is how quickly 'normal' relations were restored. In this sense, the decade after the removal of party First Secretary Alexander Dubček and Prime Minister Oldřich Černík from office in 1969–1970 and their replacement with the Brezhnevite 'realists' Husák and Lubomír Štrougal respectively takes on a special relevance.

This chapter uses East German government records, tourist reports and secret police (Stasi) files to examine areas of 'renewed' political cooperation in the 1970s more closely. Its central thesis is that the agreement to introduce visa-free travel for East German and Czechoslovak citizens on both sides of the border from 1972 played a key role in the GDR's attempts to assert its sovereignty and independent existence vis-à-vis the FRG. In this sense, the post-1969 East German-Czechoslovak relationship underpinned what Garton Ash refers to as a process of 'stabilisation without liberalisation'.[20] It also influenced East Berlin's response to the Solidarity crisis in Poland in 1980–1981. The chapter begins by looking at border security, moves on to examine issues of ideology, defence preparedness and education, and ends with a discussion of the role of foreign travel in methods of SED rule. Throughout, the emphasis will be on the political aspects of the partnership between Prague and East Berlin, although economics and trade also played some part.

Borders and Border Security

The divided Germany of the post-1949 era has been characterised by Thomas Lindenberger as a 'border region of the Cold War'.[21] The physical presence and historical specificity of the heavily-guarded inter-zonal boundaries can be observed on many different levels: the visceral, the

geopolitical, the generational, the cultural, the sartorial-transgressive, the ecological and even in private fantasies and desires, fiction-writing, individual biography or personal life-story telling.[22] The GDR's long drawn-out quest for international (or rather Western) recognition of its existence as a separate state is an important part of what historians call 'normalisation… in relation to external affairs'.[23] The building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 is commonly regarded as marking the beginning of this process, as it placed West Germany and its NATO allies before a dilemma. Either they could move cautiously towards *de facto* recognition of the GDR as a (separate) non-NATO country aligned since 1955 to the Warsaw Pact bloc of nations, and negotiate with its ('legitimate') state representatives in order to make gradual improvements to East Germans' lives, a strategy which SPD leader Willy Brandt's advisor Egon Bahr called *Wandel durch Annäherung* ('change through rapprochement').[24] Or they could erect new barriers to dialogue with the East in face of the evident failure of the 1950s 'rollback' strategy to bring about any significant weakening of communist rule there.

The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, and the apparent involvement of East German troops, caused a temporary halt in the slow but inexorable move from the latter to the former strategy as the 1960s progressed. Parliamentary elections were due in the FRG in September 1969, and these resulted in the formation of the 'social-liberal' coalition headed by Brandt a month later. Finally in March 1970 East and West German leaders met face-to-face for the first time at a 'summit' in the East German city of Erfurt. This was a game-changing development, which paved the way for the implementation of a Transit Agreement regarding civilian traffic between West Germany and West Berlin in May 1972; the official participation of the GDR in the Summer Olympics in Munich in August–September 1972 under their own flag; the Basic Treaty between the FRG and GDR in December 1972; and formal diplomatic recognition of East Germany by Britain, France and the USA in 1973–1974.[25]

As far as the 'normalisation' of German-German relations was concerned, the GDR thus appeared to have scored a number of successes in the early 1970s, especially as the Basic Treaty with the FRG heralded the entry of both countries into the United Nations (UN) in September 1973.[26] According to the US State Department, by the beginning of 1975 the GDR already enjoyed diplomatic relations with 113 countries, most of them belonging to the non-communist world.[27] By 1981 this had risen to

130 countries.[28] The new East German constitution, adopted on 7 October 1974, dropped all mention of the 'German nation' and simply referred to the GDR as a 'socialist state of workers and peasants… forever and irrevocably allied with the Soviet Union'.[29] Meanwhile, as a precaution, and in case things went wrong with the new Transit Agreement, significant technical improvements were made to the Berlin Wall in the second half of the 1970s under a scheme known as 'Border Wall 75' (*Grenzmauer 75*).[30] Famously, Honecker predicted in January 1989 that the Wall would still exist in '50 or 100 years' time'.[31] Many in the West believed him.

For all the fanfare over détente, the new *Ostpolitik*, as the Bahr-Brandt policy had come to be known in West Germany, was still not fully trusted by the GDR, some of whose leaders continued to see it (to draw on a phrase first used in 1963 by East German Foreign Minister Otto Winzer) as 'aggression in felt slippers'; in other words as a continuation of, rather than a fundamental break with, the old 'imperialist' rollback strategy of the 1950s.[32] The Stasi in particular worried about ongoing 'ideological penetration' by the West, not only of the GDR, but of neighbouring communist states, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia. For this reason, it kept a close eye on 'subversive' organisations such as *Aktion Sühnezeichen*, a joint East–West German church initiative which ran youth camps in the 1960s and 70s in countries behind the Iron Curtain,[33] and Amnesty International, the human rights group established in London in July 1961.[34] Concerns about border security were also heightened in the late 1970s. Ten years after the meeting in Erfurt, there was still no Western recognition of GDR citizenship, as Honecker complained in a speech to SED functionaries in Gera on 13 October 1980.[35] In the same month, representatives of the Western Allies were observed openly filming a military parade in East Berlin to mark the thirty-first anniversary of the GDR's existence in order to make the point that deployment of East German troops in the ex-German capital was a violation of that city's post-1945 four-power status.[36] Partly in response to this 'provocation', the East German authorities dramatically increased the compulsory daily minimum currency exchange required of western civilians visiting East Berlin from thirteen to twenty-five marks, and for West Berliners from six-and-a-half marks to twenty-five marks. It also abolished the exemption previously offered to pensioners and lowered the maximum age for children's free passes from sixteen to six.[37]

The presence of Western military observers at the anniversary parade in East Berlin on 7 October 1980 (as in previous years) was a particularly striking example of why the GDR was still not a 'normal' country. None of this was imaginable for any other Soviet bloc state. There was also strong evidence that many East Germans still felt that they belonged to a single nation with West Germans, a feeling that was partly based on imagined historical and cultural ties, partly on shared experiences of watching the same films and television programmes, and partly on very real private-familial connections and encounters with friends and strangers along the border.[38] Physical barriers could not overcome this, as shown, for instance, in the unforeseen spontaneous welcome given to Brandt by ordinary East Germans in Erfurt in March 1970.[39] Whether they regarded the Federal Chancellor's gradual shift towards *de facto* recognition of the GDR as a stroke of genius or as a tactical mistake that would make things worse in East Germany, few saw him as a foreign statesman who, by coming to Erfurt, was interfering in business that did not concern him.[40] At best, the Basic Treaty of 1972 and the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 ensured that the physical border between the two Germanys would not be changed by force; they did not guarantee that it would last forever.[41]

In respect to wider Cold War tensions, the GDR's frontier with Czechoslovakia was clearly less of an issue than the German-German border and the Berlin question. However, in terms of regional security politics it was also a source of anxiety for the SED regime in the 1960s and beyond. At the time of the Prague Spring, Stasi files indicate concern about unofficial meetings between young East and West Germans in the ČSSR—especially in Prague and in the area around the three-way frontier town of Cheb in the Karlovy Vary region—and the opportunities this occasionally gave to GDR citizens to flee to the FRG.[42] The border was shut to all 'normal' civilian traffic during 'Operation Danube', the codename for the Warsaw Pact invasion of 20–21 August 1968, and remained a heavily guarded *Sperrgebiet* (closed off area) for some time after that, with the restrictions imposed on 15 August 1968 only gradually eased between 30 April 1971 and the end of that year.[43]

In the interim, the East German security services took a keen interest in how well the border was being policed on the Czech side. In June 1970, for instance, the regional Stasi authorities in Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz) reported to headquarters in East Berlin on information received from one of its agents in the passport control office in Vojtanov near Cheb, regarding 'Gypsies' seeking to enter the GDR without having the necessary

papers or money for a visa. Following pressure from East Berlin, such persons were now being turned back at the border and their passports seized, as were those who 'upon inspection arouse suspicion because of concerns over their smuggling activities, their unclean appearance or the likelihood that they intend to commit customs violations of one kind or another'.[44] In the same report, it was noted that the railway stationmaster at Vojtanov had been given permission to visit the FRG in July, and had told 'one of our secret informants' that 'he would probably try to stay in West Germany because he could earn more there than in the CSSR'. This information was subsequently passed on to the Czechoslovak state security service (StB) at central level.[45]

The Stasi was also concerned about the behaviour and political attitudes of East German citizens who visited the ČSSR in the years immediately after the Warsaw Pact invasion. Much was made of a meeting that was supposed to have taken place in Prague in late July 1969 between anti-communist activists from the GDR and FRG: 'The participants all stayed at the Hotel "Solidarita", Prague 10… The GDR citizens were in room 512 and the West Germans in room 624'.[46] In March 1970, at the time of the summit between East and West German leaders in Erfurt, a Stasi liaison officer in Prague reported that one of his StB contacts had passed on information about two GDR citizens, aged thirty-nine and thirty-four, who had been working as machine-fitters for a firm in Tachov in the Plzeň region and who got talking to an undercover informer while drinking in a bar there:

> The GDR citizens, who had drunk quite a lot, made inflammatory remarks about the development of socialism in the GDR. For instance, they claimed that 80% of the population… were against socialism and in favour of a capitalist society, as in West Germany… They also spoke in disparaging terms about Comrade W. Ulbricht… Furthermore, they suggested that by 1978 there would be a 'united' Germany. The conflict between China and the Soviet Union would play a crucial role here.[47]

Reports like these tallied with fears already existing in East Berlin since 1969 that China was interfering in Prague in order to bolster the international forces of 'counter-revolution' as part of its own escalating border conflict with Moscow.[48] Concerns about the ability of the newly-installed Husák regime to ward off threats from China and other global 'anti-Soviet' forces were heightened by a conversation between Czechoslovak

Federal Interior Minister Jan Pelnář and the head of Department X of the Stasi, Willi Damm, in July 1969.[49] According to Damm, Pelnář admitted that the Czechoslovak security services were still not 'ready for action' [*aktionsfähig*] as a result of 'federalisation' under Dubček from 1 January 1969, 'insufficient discipline and morale among the rank-and-file operatives' dating back to earlier in the 1960s, and 'the continued presence of right-wingers in leading positions':

> The investigative organs are unable to bring cases to a successful conclusion. He referred specifically to a case in Karlovy Vary, where a large group of senior functionaries of the [banned] [Revolutionary] Socialist Party had produced and distributed tons of illegal pamphlets containing anti-Soviet agitation and attacks on our party and state. Although there was enough evidence against them, the inquiry launched by the investigative organs was still not making any progress…[50]

However, the replacement of Pelnář on 28 January 1970 with the more hard-line Radko Kaska led to a gradual increase in confidence that the Czechoslovak security services were finally getting a grip on the situation and were willing to engage in deeper cooperation on border and regional security questions. In a report on a visit to Prague in April 1971, Damm noted that 'Comrade KASKA immediately agreed with my proposal for a joint consultation on issues to do with passport control and tourist traffic'. Even more significantly, Kaska was 'happy to grant me access to the archives of the Federal Ministry of Interior and the Czech Ministry in order to gather information connected to live investigations'.[51] Among the documents that Damm was able to get hold of was a report on the above-mentioned 'Trotsykist' group, the 'Revolutionary Socialist Party', and its supposed links to dissident communists in Paris and West Berlin, which he subsequently had translated into German for his superiors at Stasi headquarters.[52] This cooperation paved the way for a face-to-face meeting between Kaska and Stasi chief Erich Mielke in Prague on 14 January 1972. The discussion dealt not only with information sharing on suspect individuals, but also, more generally, with 'the special challenges in managing travel and tourist traffic posed by the anticipated lifting of border restrictions'.[53] The following day, and presumably after Mielke had signalled his agreement, the new arrangements for visa-free travel came into effect.

One final area of border cooperation, which was very relevant to the GDR vis-à-vis its Transit Agreement with the FRG in May 1972, was that the Czechoslovak authorities remained determined not to allow Austrians (or other western tourists travelling from Austria) to use its territory as a direct land route to and from the GDR or West Berlin.[54] Instead, western passport-holders wishing to travel to these places would have to use the prescribed routes from the FRG set out in the Transit Agreement, an arrangement that not only reflected shared, inter-dependent East German-Czechoslovak thinking on border security but also safeguarded the income that the GDR hoped to make from compulsory currency exchanges. Indeed, the ČSSR seems to have already taken a leaf out of East Germany's book in this respect, introducing its own compulsory exchange system from 1 June 1970, whereby tourists seeking to enter its territory from the FRG and Austria were required to exchange US$5 per day (for adults) and US$2.50 (for children aged six to fourteen).[55] The reciprocal visa-free travel afforded to GDR citizens from 15 January 1972 thus squared the circle. It was a clear and, for East Berlin, reassuring signal that, after taking the wrong path in 1968, the ČSSR was now actively promoting itself again as a committed member of the socialist community of nations. Nonetheless, the border between the two countries—including the four official entry points by rail, the four by road, and a handful of secret portals which were only to be opened in emergencies (so-called *Katastrophenübergänge*)—continued to be monitored closely by the Stasi, which as late as 1986 commissioned a series of detailed photographs from the air of every single gateway in and out of Czechoslovakia and stored them in its archives.[56] State security, in other words, remained paramount, and there could be no relaxation in this regard.

Ideology

Even without the ideological challenges emerging from Prague and Beijing, the last three years of Walter Ulbricht's period as First Secretary of the SED, from 1968 to 1971, were full of uncertainties for the GDR on the European and world stages. In particular, the formation of the 'social-liberal' coalition in Bonn in October 1969, followed by Brandt's treaties with Moscow and Warsaw in August and December 1970 respectively, including recognition of the Oder-Neiße line as the permanent border between (East) Germany and Poland, undermined the GDR's claims about the FRG being a 'neo-fascist' or 'imperialist' state.[57] It also

weakened Ulbricht's assertion that only communism and Soviet troops in the GDR could guarantee peace in Europe and uphold the post-war settlement, including Poland's new borders, in the face of West German 'revanchism'. Brandt's gesture in kneeling before the monument to the victims of the Warsaw ghetto rising of 1943 during his state visit to the Polish capital in December 1970 did wonders for West Germany's image in Eastern Europe (and beyond). It also led to a relaxation of travel restrictions between the FRG and Poland, with (West) German expellees now able to visit their former homelands east of the Oder and Neiße rivers for the first time since the Second World War. Such developments, as far as East Berlin was concerned, might open the door to Western ideological subversion in Poland, not least after a wave of protests in the Baltic coastal cities over price rises for basic foods in late 1970 led to the shock resignation of the hard-line anti-German Władysław Gomułka as Polish party First Secretary on 20 December and his replacement by the more conciliatory Edward Gierek. Over the course of the 1970s, these concerns only grew, particularly when the Polish government failed to prevent the circulation of *samizdat* literature, including translations of the West German writer Günter Grass's 1959 novel *The Tin Drum*. The latter was officially banned in the GDR until the late 1980s because of its supposedly 'revanchist-aggressive view' of the Second World War and the Polish-German conflict in Danzig, now Gdańsk.[58]

The negotiation of an agreement for visa-free travel between Poland and the GDR, coming into effect on 1 January 1972, may have been a subtle way of trying to pre-empt or forestall West German ideological influence in the PRP, particularly in the immediate border towns along the Oder and Neiße which were difficult for East German tourists to access before the 1970s. Indeed, in 1974 a joint GDR-Polish publication claimed that the increased cross-border traffic since January 1972 was boosting socialist consciousness and furthering new, forward-looking ways of imagining citizenship and belonging via the 'creation of new [transnational] societal contacts':

> Small border towns in Poland like Słubice, Gubin or Zgorzelec have become—thanks to being brought together with Frankfurt [an der Oder], Guben and Görlitz—the equivalent of big urban centres… which offer their residents a great many attractions… The borders are slowly 'melting away'. A sure sign of this is that the term 'border' is gradually disappearing from

the vocabulary used by the residents of the border area. In the foreseeable future the term 'border area' will die out too.[59]

What the pamphlet failed to mention was the tensions caused by the fact that young East Germans had greater access to Western literature and films when they travelled to Poland than they did at home[60]—including the screen version of *The Tin Drum*, co-written and directed by the West German filmmaker Volker Schlondörff and released in 1979. In fact, this problem was being raised by the GDR's Office for Youth Tourism as early as 1973, when it noted, in its annual report on 11 December:

> In the areas close to the border with the PRP what is particularly noticeable is the rise in the number of short-term trips made by our young people for the sole purpose of going to the cinema. Films from the West (horror movies and westerns) seem to have a particularly strong appeal.[61]

What is interesting to observe here is that whereas in 1969–1970 Czechoslovakia had still been regarded as a source of greater ideological threat to East Germany than Poland, by 1973 things had clearly changed. A key factor was the imagined attitude of Husák towards West Germany. In East Berlin, Brandt was seen as being more committed to NATO than to *Ostpolitik,* even in the year of the historic German-German summit in Erfurt.[62] In a minuted conversation during Husák's official appearance at the Leipzig spring trade fair on 8 March 1970, a fortnight before Brandt was due in Erfurt, Ulbricht warned his guest of honour and fellow communist:

> The key weapon in the imperialists' arsenal is psychological warfare. The USA and Bonn have developed a sophisticated system for penetrating the socialist countries… Our task is to unmask this system… in particular by energetically opposing all traces of petit-bourgeois ideology within the sphere of culture (Kafka etc.) and the economy.[63]

In speaking so boldly, the SED First Secretary also—and perhaps deliberately—revealed his own lingering scepticism towards the new Czechoslovak party leader on a personal level. This wariness was due in part to the 'reformist blots' in Husák's past, stretching back to his involvement with alleged 'Slovak nationalism' inside the KSČ in the late 1940s and early 1950s and continuing with his more recent record of collaboration with

Dubček. It also reflected Ulbricht's ongoing concerns about the possibility of a peace deal between Prague and Bonn that would undermine East Berlin's claim to recognition as an equal German partner.[64]

After 1969–1970, though, there were significant improvements in ČSSR-GDR relations. Husák turned out to be more reliable from the East German viewpoint than Ulbricht had feared. For instance, the report of the Piller Commission, exposing official anti-Semitism and major miscarriages of justice during the Stalinist era, was not published on Czechoslovak soil.[65] Instead, by 1972 articles were appearing in Czech literary magazines arguing that '"Kafkaism" and… the "alienation" connected with it' were behind the 'influences of Zionism on the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968'.[66] 'Reformists' from the world of politics, academia and high culture had meanwhile been forced out of office and in some cases into exile—including Eduard Goldstücker, the leading spirit behind the 1963 Kafka conference and President of the Czechoslovak Writers' Union at the time of the Prague Spring, who was now denounced by the KSČ as a leading ideological 'deviationist'.[67] Dubček himself had been expelled from the KSČ in 1970, shortly after returning from a brief spell as Czechoslovak ambassador in the Turkish capital Ankara. Censorship had been reimposed, and already by 1975 was noticeably much tougher in Czechoslovakia than in Poland, where, supposedly, the 'Gierek regime took little official notice of [the] various "free universities" or "flying universities"' formed by dissident writers and intellectuals.[68]

As the 1970s progressed, the GDR also became more focused on broader ideological challenges at the global level. Convergence theory—the notion that East and West were becoming culturally and politically more similar as scientific 'experts' sought technological rather than ideological solutions to problems—had already been identified by Stasi chief Mielke as the West's latest subversive weapon against the Soviet bloc in a speech given at the end of 1968 to members of the SED branch at secret police headquarters in East Berlin. Its goal was to distract attention from the key question in politics: 'who rules whom?'.[69] Honecker too had used resentments inside the SED at the growing influence of technocratic experts in the economic sphere in his successful battle to oust Ulbricht as First Secretary in 1970–1971.[70] In 1979 a joint Soviet-East German publication on Marxist-Leninist cultural theory summed up the root cause of the Czechoslovak 'counter-revolution' in 1968 in one word: 'de-ideologisation' [*Entideologisierung*], a term denoting the supposedly 'false' separation of ideology from the material and social construction of

life.[71] In other words, if in the 1960s, as Dorothee Wierling points out, 'the engineer became the essential figure' in Ulbricht's technocratic-modernist vision of 'socialist progress',[72] after 1970 this same engineer was also seen as needing a major ideological reboot. Above all, he or she needed to see through the dangerous 1960s 'illusions regarding the auto-mated nature [*Programmierbarkeit*] of the capitalist [and socialist] economic system[s] and the potentials for preventing or managing social conflicts by means of appropriate "social technologies"'.[73] Such claims merely disguised the continuing crisis in class relations in the capitalist world, now magnified by the 1970s profit squeeze, while simultaneously underplaying the Soviet bloc's undoubted achievements in the spheres of industrial/cultural production and revolutionary world-outlook.[74]

A second threat came from a different source: China. Having first reignited fears of a violent end to the Sino-Soviet split during the tense border dispute with the USSR on the Ussuri River in March 1969, it was now seen as adding extra menace to European and global security because of its growing closeness to the West. Mao's regime also presented an ideological challenge: Brezhnev believed that Beijing had abandoned Marxism-Leninism, and with it 'proletarian internationalism'. This was supposedly reflected in its 'unqualified condemnation' of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968;[75] its willingness to open up diplomatic relations with 'imperialist powers', including the FRG in October 1972;[76] and its uncooperative stance over Soviet military aid for North Vietnam.[77] Further concerns were raised when the new reunified Socialist Republic of Vietnam joined the non-aligned movement rather than the communist bloc upon admittance to the UN in 1976, a step which again was interpreted by Moscow and its East German ally as a worrying deviation from basic Marxist-Leninist principles and a victory for Chinese interests in South-East Asia.[78]

How did all this affect official East German attitudes towards cross-border cooperation with Czechoslovakia in the 1970s? In the ideological sphere, there were two main developments after 1972: first in relation to tourism as a means of raising historical awareness of national and international class struggles past and present, and secondly in respect to military 'preparedness'. Both these developments entailed a focus on youth, but they also involved stepping beyond the idea of the GDR simply as a self-contained 'socialist nation' to forge a more regionally-based strategy for educating young people in the principles of 'proletarian internationalism'.

Regarding tourism, this meant the enactment of policies that were designed to overcome 'the artificial distinction between domestic and overseas travel'. First, the material basis for both types of tourism had to be secured, with constant price rises in Poland making long-term planning with respect to trips to Czechoslovakia seem easier and more cost-effective. Second, cooperation with youth tourist groups in both Poland and the ČSSR would help to identify:

> Routes for walking tours that provide opportunities for learning about the revolutionary traditions of the working class and the achievements of socialism, and on top of that, for visiting sites of historical and rural interest.

Finally, the GDR's Office for Youth Tourism planned to organise 'friendship trains' (*Freundschaftszüge*) to travel to destinations in all three countries at particular times of the year, fifteen trains in 1974 and twenty in 1975. The highlight of this programme were the trains organised on the anniversary of the 'Great Socialist October Revolution' and on the day of celebration marking the foundation of the Soviet youth organisation, the *Komsomol*. The parts of the journey taking place in the GDR itself included themes such as 'On the trail of Ernst Thälmann and his revolutionary battles' and 'on the pathways to anti-fascist liberation'. Members of 'progressive' youth groups from all over the world, including 'the capitalist West and countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America', were invited to take part. Through a careful intertwining of its domestic and foreign travel programmes, the Office for Youth Tourism thus aimed 'to make full use of all opportunities presented by the introduction of visa-free travel with the PRP and the CSSR' in order to 'nurture in our young people the principles of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism'.[79]

Military preparedness had been a particular cause of concern in GDR-Czechoslovak relations in 1968–1969, with developments during the Prague Spring suggesting in the minds of East German military and secret police observers that the ČSSR might no longer be psychologically or materially equipped to defend its western borders in case of NATO attack—borders which also protected the entire socialist bloc, the GDR included.[80] The Helsinki accords of 1975 seemed to mark the highpoint of détente in Cold War Europe, with collective security now guaranteeing the post-1945 settlement. However, by the late 1970s armed, possibly even nuclear, confrontation was again becoming more likely, if not between the two Germanys, then at least between the two superpowers.

Areas of tension now included not only China and Vietnam, but Angola, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Afghanistan and (from 1980) Poland.

Against this background, the increased emphasis placed in the GDR on military preparedness and civil defence training in schools and universities from the late 1970s can be understood, from the perspective of East Germany's leaders, both as a necessary precaution and as a useful political tool for *Reideologisierung*. But in contrast with what previous studies have implied,[81] this was not simply an inward-looking, domestic strategy of 'forced militarisation' related solely to *Abgrenzung* (demarcation) from the FRG or 'eternal friendship' with the USSR. To make military preparedness really worthwhile, it had to proceed from a regional base. Or to put it another way, there was no point in East German youth being placed on a defence-aware footing if their counterparts across the border in Czechoslovakia were still being influenced by the 'cosmopolitan' ideals of 1968 and if they were still heroising national martyrs like Jan Palach, as StB reports which were shared with the Stasi in the early 1970s seemed to suggest.[82]

In a several-page 'Assessment of Cooperation with the Czech and Slovak Ministries for Schools' in January 1977, the GDR Ministry of Education highlighted, alongside various other positive developments, a growing interest in the ČSSR's teaching profession in facilitating 'a sharing of experiences in the field of Marxism-Leninism and bringing socialist principles into schools'. Already in 1976 fifty instances of guest lectures and attendances at pedagogical conferences had been recorded.[83] However, the Ministry wanted to build on this. In June 1978, for instance, it sponsored a five-day trip by a delegation from the SED Central Committee's Department of Education to visit a kindergarten school in Rakovník and a secondary school in Jesenice, both in the central Bohemian district to the west of Prague. The delegates were interested in political-ideological work among teachers, noting that since the XVth congress of the KSČ in April 1976 there was an increasing emphasis on 'cultivation of socialist traditions' [*Traditionspflege*] and making regular 'trips to visit factories and collectives' as a means of countering the 'negative' influence of West German and Austrian television. But their main interest was in the 'challenges presented by the introduction of defence training' into the school curriculum. At Rakovník, they were shown how 'the three- to six-year-olds were introduced to the principles of defence preparedness'. In particular, the lesson plans provided a grounding in 'general rules of behaviour in an emergency, the use of gas masks, how to find the nearest emergency

shelter, appropriate conduct in shelters, and so on'. The pre-school infants were also encouraged to think about what soldiers did to defend the country, both by building stories out of pictures and through the establishment of 'close connections with a unit of the Czechoslovak People's Army'.

At the secondary school in Jesenice, compulsory defence lessons (*Wehrunterricht*) took place four times a year for children in the seventh and eighth grades, with the purpose being 'to make pupils aware of the necessity of defence and to provide them with basic knowledge of what to do in the event of a nuclear, chemical or biological attack'. By the end of year seven, the children were already expected to be able to complete 'basic tasks' such as:

- answering questions on the political aspects of defence preparedness,
- solving tasks related to fire protection, first aid and traffic safety, and
- being able to throw a hand grenade and run 200m while wearing a gas mask.

Those children who excelled during *Wehrunterricht* were particularly prized by the party-state:

> A careful pre-selection of future candidates [for KSČ membership] is carried out. Those selected are made familiar with the history of the party in 'Lenin-circles' and prepared for admittance to the party. In selecting candidates, care is taken to make sure that those who have attended religion classes are not put forward.[84]

This was very similar to procedures then being developed in GDR universities,[85] and filtering down from there to the school system, so much so that it would be reasonable to assume that the exchanges of the mid- to late 1970s had had some impact on education and cadre-selection in both communist countries. Indeed, the Czechoslovaks appear to have got there first in 1977–1978 because, as Anna Saunders points out, in the GDR it was 1978–1979 that 'mark[ed] the first full school year in which obligatory military education was carried out in schools'. Furthermore, the East German system seems to have followed the Czechoslovak example in expecting teachers to place pressure on their pupils by letting them (or their parents) know that, if they failed to take part in *Wehrunterricht*, they 'risked facing discrimination in their future schooling'.[86] As well as schools and universities, the East German trade unions, via the *Jugendamt* ('youth

office') of the Free German Trade Union Association (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, FDGB), also seem to have got in on the act, sending a delegation to an international conference of young trade unionists organised in Prague in February 1979. Here they were instructed to work with their Czechoslovak hosts to 'counter any anti-Soviet agitation or attempts to defame the socialist bloc' on the part of delegates from Western countries, while reaffirming the joint military-political resolve of the youth of both countries to 'fight for world peace and disarmament' in the context of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.[87]

Of course, it would be wrong to assume that all of the overseas political and educational connections established by the East German regime in the 1970s were related to military ends or designed to spread the new, post-Helsinki message that 'peace must be armed!' For instance, the strong support that the GDR gave to left-wing political exiles from Chile after the violent coup against the democratically-elected Marxist government of Salvador Allende in September 1973 was more free-standing and focused on developing a state-specific form of socialist solidarity, as Peter Grieder has recently confirmed.[88] Nonetheless, in the much-closer-to-home strategic context of GDR-Czechoslovak relations, securing of the common border with 'NATO-West Germany' and ensuring that it was defended by battle-ready, class-conscious patriots on both the Czechoslovak and East German sides was the top priority. Or, as an official joint publication on areas of 'socialist cooperation' put it in 1978, what particularly brought the two countries together was a shared interest in regional security issues based on the fact that both 'had to live with the imperialist system directly on their western borders'.[89]

Socialist Rule and the Value of Tourism

In his gripping 2015 debut crime-thriller *Mordshochhaus* ('High-Rise Murder'), set in East Berlin in 1975, the former GDR biochemist turned novelist Richard Grosse offers a compelling picture of how power functioned both from above and from below in communist society in the early Honecker period. His account is slightly less dark, but no less indebted to the totalitarian model, than Garton Ash's portrayal of 1981:

> This was a state which, seemingly with never-ending care and attention, looked out for the security of the people it had entrusted itself to rule over. There was no need to worry about what might happen tomorrow, life just

> seemed to run continuously on an endless loop. Boredom came around now again, and with it the demand for something new, something beyond the established routines. This is why every opportunity to stage a celebration was seized upon, and of such opportunities there were plenty. Women's Day, Men's Day, the First of May, meetings of residents' associations, evenings organised for the socialist work brigades, Republic Day, works' outings, the birthday of each and every member of a collective… [and so on.] The regular, clockwork-like passage from one week to the next nearly always heralded something new, something to take us away from the drabness of everyday existence.[90]

Grosse's novel, with its side-references to official state parades, including foreign guests, along the Karl-Marx-Allee, private parties on the Strausberger Platz and regular weekend visits from relatives living in West Berlin under the new travel arrangements that came into effect in May 1972, might easily be dubbed a 'metropolitan' view which is not so representative of what life was like for most 'ordinary' citizens living outside the East German capital in the 1970s. On the other hand, the reference to East Germans needing something extra to take them away from the tedium of everyday life—or what Wierling describes as the SED's cultivation of a shared 'mission to happiness'[91]—can also be identified in policies designed to nurture tourism to neighbouring socialist countries, first and foremost Poland and Czechoslovakia. Here too—and not just among young people—there was a clear demand for 'something beyond the established routines', a demand which the regime, within carefully-controlled limits, was actually willing to meet.

The Stasi, which saw itself not only as the 'sword and shield of the party' but as a kind of '"ersatz" foreign service' when it came to the handling of external relations,[92] was quick to celebrate the increase in East German tourists of all ages visiting Czechoslovakia immediately after the coming into effect of visa-free travel on 15 January 1972. Figures it obtained from the GDR border service indicated that in the first twenty-four hours of operation, some 20,151 East Germans crossed into Czechoslovakia, a more than fifty-fold increase on the 370 East Germans who had made the same crossing on the same day in January 1971. Yet still only 856 Czechoslovak citizens had travelled in the other direction on 15–16 January 1972, a ratio of almost 1:24.[93]

However, the fact that many more GDR citizens were visiting the ČSSR than vice versa did not seem to cause much concern to the East German

authorities. Potential earnings from incoming Czechoslovak tourists were not afforded the same priority as ensuring that East Germans gained new experiences and at the same time acted as ambassadors for the GDR's 'superior' work-ethic and commitment to 'proletarian internationalism'.[94] Of course, this wish was not to be taken too far. It was only the 'right' kind of citizen who was considered to be worthy of representing the GDR on trips abroad to fellow Soviet bloc countries. Indeed, the same internal Stasi report expressed satisfaction that Czechoslovak border guards had already on 15–16 January 1972 refused entry to eight male GDR citizens on the grounds that their hair was too long, making it impossible to recognise them from the photographs on their ID cards.[95] It is difficult to imagine a more reassuring sign for the Stasi that communist rule in the ČSSR was becoming more normalised than the willingness of its border guards to pay attention to such details. It boded well for future vigilance against the cosmopolitan 'class enemy', identifiable from 'decadent', Western styles of dress.

In the early 1970s, the GDR authorities also placed a lot of store on the agreement for visa-free travel across its border with Poland, perhaps seeing this as a useful tool for countering the potential threats stemming from the Polish-West German rapprochement of 1970. Indeed, according to Cezary Trosiak, 'the East German side was the more active in seeking out institutional contacts [and] in grasping every opportunity for cooperation with a Polish factory, cultural association, educational body, youth group or trade union organisation'.[96] Almost from the start, however, doubts arose about tourism to and from Poland. As in the case of the agreement with the Czechoslovaks, the GDR had not expected to make any net earnings from Polish visitors. However, the constant price rises in Poland made sending East Germans there on state-organised trips increasingly expensive, with costs impossible to predict in advance. Looser censorship in Poland was also an issue, as we have seen, but more than this, there was a sense that the communist authorities in Warsaw could not get a grip on the country's economic problems or use the official trade unions to prevent recurrent industrial unrest. In the Stasi's eyes, this was as much a political as an economic failing. The head of Department X, Willi Damm, for instance, made some interesting notes from a private conversation he had with the head of the First Directorate of the Czechoslovak Interior Ministry's new domestic intelligence service, Miloš Hladík, during his trip to Prague in April 1971. At one point, their conversation turned to the

Polish Deputy Minister of Interior, Mirosław Milewski. According to Hladík:

> Whilst [Milewski] came across as very 'revolutionary' at the last leaders' meeting in Budapest and used his speech to draw special attention to the struggle against ideological diversion, [in his recent visit to Prague] he acted in a very formal manner and seemed to be much more mindful of his status as a deputy Minister. The actual purpose of his visit was to find out whether the KSČ would be willing to hand over any material it might have on the recent disturbances in the PRP [i.e. the strikes of December 1970, M.S.]. Comrade MILEWSKI also repeatedly emphasised that the events in the PRP were not to be seen in connection with any kind of ideological diversion but were simply a 'legitimate form of workers' protest'. Comrade HLADIK told me that he could not accept or understand this position.[97]

Damm's further visits to Czechoslovakia in September 1971 and January 1972 led him to conclude that here, at least, 'the supply situation is generally good. Discipline in the workplace has been tightened. Industrial production increasingly takes place according to schedule. There aren't many problems in agriculture'.[98] But the same could not be said for Poland, whose economy and 'work discipline' failed to improve as the 1970s continued. The fact that the one-time Deputy Minister Milewski went on to become Polish Minister of Interior in his own right on 8 October 1980, at the height of the Solidarity crisis, may have played a role in the decision taken in East Berlin later that month to end the agreement on visa-free travel.[99]

In addition, the GDR authorities had to decide whether to exploit the growing levels of hostility within East Germany towards Polish tourists for domestic purposes, or take steps to discourage it lest it damage external relations within the Soviet bloc.[100] As we have seen, Poles were accused of exploiting visa-free travel to the GDR to buy up its better supplies of household electrical goods and take advantage of its relatively low inflation rates.[101] Such animosities were not felt towards Czechoslovak tourists, or certainly not to the same degree. Poles were also resented because, unlike Czechoslovaks and most other East Europeans, from the late 1970s they enjoyed much easier travel arrangements to West Berlin. Indeed, even after the formal end of visa-free traffic between Poland and the GDR in October 1980, Poles could still come to East Berlin on day-trips from West Berlin, often carrying West German marks which they had earned there and which they then proceeded to spend (like other day-trippers

from the West) in the communist capital's growing number of deluxe hard-currency shops.[102] This may explain the resentment that Garton Ash found among East Berlin housewives when the new travel restrictions were announced. East Germans were more hemmed in, Poles (apparently) were not. But at least the former could still travel, visa-free, to the ČSSR, and—as a concession to youth—there was also a gradual movement in the 1970s away from seeing 'beards, long hair, and short skirts' as wholly 'contrary to the spirit of socialism'.[103]

Conclusion

The argument presented in this essay suggests that post-1968 'normalisation' in Eastern Europe needs to be seen in a regional, and not just a national-domestic context, or with reference to top-down relations with Moscow. This applies as much to Czechoslovakia as to the GDR; indeed, it would be interesting to investigate how Husák's government and the StB saw its relations with East Berlin (and Warsaw) after 1969–1970.[104] The GDR's regional agenda for the 1970s of course had a number of distinct features which make direct comparisons with the ČSSR's programme for 'normalisation' difficult, if not impossible. Even East Germany's rulers did not see their state as 'normal'. Rather, for them, the whole point of 'normalisation' was to normalise—and thus prolong—the abnormal, in other words the existence of two German states. Emphasis on the GDR as a separate, *socialist* nation, was not enough to achieve this. Rather, residual forms of commitment to 'proletarian internationalism' and regional solutions to security issues were also needed. This can be related to the burden of a shared past with West Germany, a past which required the provision of answers to the outside world about how violence, militarism and genocide could be denied the chance to emanate from German soil again. Added to this was an even greater existential problem in the present—how to avert the danger of nuclear annihilation in view of the ongoing arms race which began to accelerate with the Kremlin's stationing of land-launched SS-20 ballistic missiles in Eastern Europe in 1977–1978 and NATO's 'double-track decision' announced in December 1979.[105]

The opening of the GDR's borders to Poland and Czechoslovakia for visa-free travel in 1972 was part of this attempt to secure the GDR's regional existence in Central Europe. Yet in fact, the two borders came to have different meanings. The looser arrangements on the Polish border lasted for eight years or so only. The decision to tighten controls again in

October 1980 was blamed on Polish economic and political mismanagement. This allowed the SED to align itself with popular anti-Polish sentiment among East German citizens, but the latter did not determine policy. Rather, a bigger fear for the regime was civil war in Poland, leading to Western intervention and possible East-West military conflict. This was not in the interests of the GDR, as it would undermine its—and the Kremlin's—attempts to solidify the post-war settlement and frontiers after the Helsinki conference. It would also destroy East Germany's already precarious living standards. This is what ended the rather bizarre 1970s experiment with 'transcending' borders between the GDR and Poland.

By 1980, the GDR's 'open' frontier with the ČSSR had come to mean something different. This was partly due to Czechoslovakia's geographical situation—like East Germany, but unlike Poland, it shared a frontier with the FRG. In a regional-strategic sense, this meant that the GDR had an interest in encouraging its southern neighbour to strengthen, rather than overcome, geographical and ideological borders and show willingness to police and defend them, something which, in official East German eyes, had been notably absent in 1968. At the same time, the prospect of stronger relations between the Czechoslovaks and the West Germans was even more alarming to East Berlin than the rapprochement reached between Bonn and Warsaw in December 1970. Hence East German visions for Czechoslovak 'normalisation' had to focus more on the revival of 'proletarian internationalism' combined with respect for *separate* national cultures and common interest not only in Brezhnevite Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy, but also in economic competency. By and large, Husák's regime fulfilled these expectations in the 1970s and beyond. For Honecker, as well as for the Stasi, the ČSSR was increasingly identified as a 'reliable' ally when it came to upholding socialist norms and preserving Cold War frontiers in Europe. Only in the midst of the very different political crisis of autumn 1989 was the East German government willing to contemplate ending visa-free travel for its citizens to Prague and other Czechoslovak cities. And in contrast to 1980, when the population reacted passively to the border closure with Poland, this time there were protests and demonstrations in the streets.

Notes

1. Garton Ash's time in East Germany, during which the Stasi identified him as an 'object' of special interest, is documented in his book *The File: A Personal History* (London, 1997).

2. C. Trosiak, 'Die Grenzöffnung von 1972', in H. Schultz (ed.), *Grenzen im Ostblock und ihre Überwindung* (Berlin, 2001), pp. 147–63.

3. I. I. Kavass and J. P. Granier (eds), *Human Rights, the Helsinki Accords, and the United States: Semiannual reports by the President to the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (Buffalo, NY, 1982), p. 40. See also J. C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy* (Minneapolis, MN, 1995), p. 83.

4. T. Garton Ash, *"Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein…": Die DDR heute* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1981), pp. 188–9.

5. For an (admittedly) post-1989 example, which nonetheless is written in the style of older, Cold War-era publications, see W. Sikorksi and R. Laabs, *Checkpoint Charlie and the Wall: A Divided People Rebel,* trans. by George Bailey (= American journalist and former director of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty) (Berlin, 1998) [1997], esp. the timeline on pp. 145–8.

6. On travel from the GDR to Poland in the 1950s, which was restricted to officially staged tours only, see K. Ruchniewicz, '"Wer das heutige Polen bereist, kann eigentlich berichten, was er will": Reisen von Deutschen nach Polen in den 1950er Jahren', in J. Kochanowski and J. von Puttkamer (eds), *1956: (Nieco) inne spojrzenie / Eine (etwas) andere Perspektive* (Warsaw, 2016), pp. 305–31.

7. P. Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford, 2010).

8. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent*, p. 83. See also M. Allinson, '1977: The GDR's Most Normal Year?', in M. Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?* (New York and Oxford, 2009), pp. 253–77 (here pp. 254 and 266).

9. Garton Ash, *"Und willst du nicht…"*, p. 204.

10. Garton Ash, *The File*, p. 12.

11. S. Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971–1989* (Bonn, 1998), p. 86.

12. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent*, p. 64.

13. See, for instance, Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR*. As many of the contributors to Fulbrook's volume nonetheless stress, seeking answers to the question of how, when and whether SED rule was 'normalised' does not mean to imply that it was ever accepted as 'normal' by the majority of ordinary East Germans.

14. Allinson, '1977', pp. 254 and 276. My italics.

15. H. Schultz, 'Von der Nachkriegsordnung zur postsozialistischen Staatenwelt', in Schultz (ed.), *Grenzen im Ostblock*, pp. 11–35 (here p. 22).

16. Wolle, *Die heile Welt*, p. 93. In 1974–1975 the travel agency *Jugendtourist*, run by the state youth organisation, also identified price increases in other

socialist countries as a potential barrier to the planned growth in the number of young East Germans making educational trips abroad for the period 1976–1980. See Information über vorliegende bzw. angekündigte Preiserhöhungen im Jugendtouristenaustausch durch Partnerbüros in sozialistischen Ländern und die sich daraus ergebenden Konsequenzen, n.d. [1974/75], in Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin (henceforth SAPMO-BArch), DC 4/1925.

17. I.-S. Kowalczuk, *Endspiel: Die Revolution von 1989 in der DDR* (Munich, 2009), p. 383. Even so, the restrictions imposed on 3 October 1989 were lifted again on 1 November—see ibid., p. 453.

18. See here J. Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR* (Cambridge, 2009), esp. p. 116. Also A. L. Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth: Historical Mythology and Youth Propaganda in the GDR, 1945–1989* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999).

19. Garton Ash, *"Und willst du nicht…"*, pp. 102–3.

20. T. Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London, 1993), pp. 185–96.

21. T. Lindenberger, 'Divided, but not Disconnected: Germany as a Border Region of the Cold War', in T. Hochscherf, C. Laucht and A. Plowman (eds), *Divided, but not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (Oxford and New York, 2010), pp. 11–33.

22. On generational aspects or 'collective biography', see D. Wierling, 'How do the 1929ers and the 1949ers differ?', in Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR*, pp. 204–19; and for an example of personal life-story writing, see R. Kuczynski, *Wall Flower: A Life on the German Border*, trans. by A. J. Steinhoff (Toronto, 2015) [1999]. For fantasy-fiction, see P. Schneider, *The Wall Jumper*, trans. by L. Hafrey (London, 2005) [1982].

23. M. Thomas, '"Aggression in Felt Slippers": Normalisation and the Ideological Struggle in the Context of Détente and *Ostpolitik*' in Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR*, pp. 33–51 (here p. 34).

24. Ibid., p. 43.

25. M. E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill, NC and London, 2001).

26. Wolle, *Die heile Welt*, p. 61.

27. U.S. State Department, *Countries of the World and their Leaders in 1975* (Detroit, MI, 1976), p. 433

28. Idem., *Countries of the World and their Leaders in 1981* (Detroit, MI, 1983), p. 527.

29. M. Judt (ed.), *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten: Beschlüsse, Berichte, interne Materialien und Alltagszeugnisse* (Berlin, 1997), p. 509.

30. P. Ahonen, *Death at the Berlin Wall* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 173–5.

31. P. Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford, 2010), p. 231.

32. Thomas, '"Aggression in Felt Slippers"', p. 35. See also P. Grieder, *The East German Leadership, 1946–73: Conflict and Crisis* (Manchester, 1999), p. 171.

33. Thomas, '"Aggression in Felt Slippers"', pp. 47–50.

34. A. Mihr, *Amnesty International in der DDR: Der Einsatz für Menschenrechte im Visier der Stasi* (Berlin, 2002); R. Brauckmann, *Amnesty International als Feindobjekt der DDR* (Berlin, 1996).

35. Judt (ed.), *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten*, p. 524. See also C. C. Low, 'Détente, Recognition, and Citizenship: The Case of East Germany', *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2015), pp. 265–89 (here esp. pp. 283–4).

36. Garton Ash, *The File*, p. 59.

37. Wolle, *Die heile Welt*, p. 64.

38. I. Merkel, 'The GDR—A Normal Country in the Centre of Europe', in Fulbrook (ed.), *Power and Society in the GDR*, pp. 194–203 (here esp. pp. 198–9).

39. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp. 46–54.

40. For an example of the more sceptical view, that *de facto* recognition of the GDR would make things worse, see the letter from an East German woman who escaped to West Germany via Prague in February 1968 to her parents, 24 March 1970, as seized by the Stasi, in Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (henceforth BStU), MfS, Archiv der Zentralstelle, Abt. X, Nr. 2411, Bl. 202–3.

41. H. A. Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West. Vol. 2: 1933–1990*, trans. by A. J. Sager (Oxford, 2007) [2000], p. 305.

42. See, for instance, Informationsbericht über eine Reise in die CSSR vom 17.08 bis 19.08.1968, 21 August 1968, in BStU, MfS, Bezirksverwaltung Magdeburg, AS 7/73, Bd. 7, Bl. 4–6; and individual files on escapes/attempted escapes during (and after) 1968 in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2008 and 2411.

43. M. Tantzscher (ed.), *Maßnahme 'Donau' und Einsatz 'Genesung': Die Niederschlagung des Prager Frühlings 1968/9 im Spiegel der MfS-Akten*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 1998), p. 16.

44. Bezirksleitung für Staatssicherheit Karl-Marx-Stadt, Stellvertreter Operativ, to Comrade Damm, director of Department X, 3 June 1970, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2413, Bl. 161–2.

45. Ibid.

46. Main Department XX to Department X, 28 January 1970, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2393, Bl. 44.

47. Dorfmeister, Operativgruppe CSSR, Prague, 16 March 1970, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2413, Bl. 31.
48. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp. 21–3.
49. Department X was in charge of 'liaison to other Eastern bloc security services'. See M. Dennis, *The Stasi: Myth and Reality* (London, 2003), p. 54.
50. Damm to Mielke, 21 July 1969, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 1747, Bl. 1–6.
51. Damm, 'Notiz über Dienstreise nach Prag vom 12.4.–15.4.1971', 20 April 1971, in ibid., Bl. 7–12.
52. 'Erklärung der ideologischen Kommission der Revolutionären Sozialistischen Partei', August 1969, received 6 August 1971, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2395, Bl. 39–52. On the Revolutionary Socialist Party, see also T. S. Brown, *Sixties Europe* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 146–7.
53. Damm, 'Notiz über Besprechung zwischen Genossen MIELKE und Genossen KASKA am 14.1.1972', 25 January 1972, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 1747, Bl. 23.
54. Bezirksleitung für Staatssicherheit Karl-Marx-Stadt, Stellvertreter Operativ, to Comrade Damm, Department X, 3 June 1970, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2413, Bl. 161–2.
55. Ibid.
56. P. Springer, *Der Blick der Staatssicherheit: Fotografien aus dem Archiv des MfS* (Dresden, 2020), pp. 176–7.
57. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 98.
58. An uncensored Polish version of *The Tin Drum*, published in 1979 by the Independent Publishing House (*Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza*) in Warsaw under the title *Blaszany bębenek*, can be found in the British Library, St. Pancras, London. By contrast, the novel was only licenced for publication in the GDR in 1987. See V. Hage, 'Kein Respekt', *Die Zeit*, 18 September 1987, at https://www.zeit.de/1987/39/kein-respekt (last accessed 5 August 2021).
59. Autorenkollektiv, *DDR-VRP: Bündnis und Zusammenarbeit* (East Berlin, 1974), pp. 223, 226 and 231.
60. Wolle, *Die heile Welt*, pp. 93–4.
61. Amt für Jugendtouristik, 'Erfahrungen aus dem visafreien Verkehr zwischen der VR Polen, der CSSR und der DDR', 11 December 1973, in SAPMO-BArch, DC 4/1925.
62. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 175.
63. S. Wolle, *Der Traum von der Revolte: Die DDR 1968* (Berlin, 2008), p. 208.
64. V. V. Kusin, *From Dubček to Charter 77: A Study of 'Normalisation' in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1978* (Edinburgh, 1978), p. 140.

65. K. McDermott and K. Pinerová, 'The Rehabilitation Process in Czechoslovakia: Party and Popular Responses', in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe (eds), *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Rehabilitation of Stalin's Victims after 1953* (London, 2015), pp. 109–31 (here p. 117).

66. B. Balint, *Kafka's Last Trial: The Case of a Literary Legacy* (New York and London, 2018), p. 171.

67. Autorenkollektiv, *Grundlagen der marxistisch-leninistischen Kulturtheorie* (East Berlin, 1979), p. 93.

68. A. Rudhart, *Twentieth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia, PA, 1975), p. 414.

69. E. Mielke, Referat für Kreisleitungssitzung, originally planned for 29 November 1968, postponed until 12 December 1968, in BStU, MfS, SED-KL 3099, Bl. 77–220.

70. Grieder, *The East German Leadership*, pp. 160–70.

71. Autorenkollektiv, *Grundlagen der marxistisch-leninistischen Kulturtheorie*, p. 93.

72. Wierling, 'How do the 1929ers and the 1949ers differ?', p. 213.

73. G. Rose, 'Modernisierungstheorien und bürgerliche Geschichtsschreibung', in Akakemie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED (ed.), *Zur theoretisch-methodologischen Analyse und historiographischen Umsetzung bürgerlicher Modernisierungstheorien: Materialen der 4. Tagung der Fachkommission "Theorie, Methodologie und Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft" der Historiker-Gesellschaft der DDR am 26. März 1981 in Berlin* (East Berlin, 1982), pp. 7–39 (here p. 13).

74. Ibid., pp. 13–14.

75. N. Khoo, *Collateral Damage: Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Termination of the Sino-Vietnamese Alliance* (New York, 2011), p. 48.

76. B. Schaefer, 'Sino-West German Relations in the Mao Era', *Cold War International History Project*, 3 November 2014, at https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/sino-west-german-relations-during-the-mao-era (last accessed 5 August 2021).

77. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, pp. 144 and 159.

78. I. Kovalenko and R. Tuzmukhamedov, *The Non-Aligned Movement: The Soviet View* (New Delhi, 1987), p. 64.

79. The above quotations are all taken from Amt für Jugendfragen, 'Programm für die Weiterentwicklung der Jugendtouristik der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in den Jahren 1974/75', 2 May 1974, in SAPMO-BArch, DC 4/1925. Ernst Thälmann was leader of the German Communist Party (KPD) from 1925–1933. He was arrested shortly after the Nazis came to power and was murdered in Buchenwald concentration camp in 1944.

80. M. Stibbe, 'Ideological Offensive: The East German Leadership, the Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of August 1968', in

K. McDermott and M. Stibbe (eds), *Eastern Europe in 1968: Responses to the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact Invasion* (London, 2018), pp. 97–123 (here pp. 108–10)

81. See, for example, C. Jordan, *Kaderschmiede Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: Aufbegehren, Säuberungen und Militarisierung 1945–1989* (Berlin, 2001), esp. pp. 178–82; and A. Saunders, *Honecker's Children: Youth and Patriotism in East(ern) Germany, 1979–2002* (Manchester, 2007), esp. pp. 31–45.

82. See, for instance, Bericht über die Entwicklung der staatssicherheitlichen Situation in der CSSR nach dem August 1969, StB document translated into German, 26 January 1970, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 2212, Bl. 39–67.

83. 'Einschätzung der Zusammenarbeit des Ministeriums für Volksbildung der DDR mit den Ministerien für Schulwesen der CSSR', 13 January 1977, in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV B 2/9.05/70.

84. All the above quotes are taken from 'Information über die Reise einer Delegation der Abteilung Volksbildung des ZK der SED in die CSSR vom 5.–9.6.1978', n.d., in ibid.

85. Jordan, *Kaderschmiede Humboldt-Universität*, pp. 182–5.

86. Saunders, *Honecker's Children*, pp. 18 and 60. See also I. Geipel, *Schöner Neuer Himmel: Aus dem Militärlabor des Ostens* (Stuttgart, 2022), pp. 31–2.

87. Jugendamt der FDGB, 'Vorlage an die Kommission für Ausreisen in das sozialistische Ausland. Betr. Aureise zur Teilnahme an der Tagung der Jugendkommission des WGB vom 5.2.–8.2.1979 in Prag', in SAPMO-BArch, DY 34/6969.

88. P. Grieder, *The German Democratic Republic* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 78 and 120–1.

89. Autorenkollektiv, *DDR-ČSSR: Sozialistische Zusammenarbeit* (East Berlin, 1978), p. 191.

90. R. Grosse, *Mordshochhaus: Ein Berlin-Krimi*, 2nd edn (Berlin, 2016) [2015], pp. 72–3.

91. Wierling, 'How do the 1929ers and the 1949ers differ?', p. 209.

92. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, p. 89.

93. Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, 'Information über den Reiseverkehr zwischen der DDR und der CSSR', 17 January 1972, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 1747, Bl. 20–2 (here Bl. 20).

94. Saunders, *Honecker's Children*, p. 84.

95. Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, 'Information über den Reiseverkehr' (as note 93), Bl. 22.

96. Trosiak, 'Die Grenzöffnung von 1972', p. 153.

97. Damm, 'Notiz über Dienstreise nach Prag vom 12.4.–15.4.1971', 20 April 1971, in BStU, MfS, Abt. X, Nr. 1747, Bl. 7–12 (here Bl. 11).

98. Damm, 'Notiz über Dienstreise nach Prag, 22.–24.9.1971', n.d., in ibid., Bl. 13–16 (here Bl. 14). See also Damm, 'Notiz über Besprechung zwischen Genossen MIELKE und Genossen KASKA am 14.1.1972', 25 January 1972, in ibid., Bl. 23.

99. On Milewski's role in 1980–1981 and reactions in the GDR, see A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: A Cold War History* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 265 and 281.

100. Saunders, *Honecker's Children*, p. 82.

101. See also Trosiak, 'Die Grenzöffnung von 1972', p. 152.

102. On the relaxation of visa restrictions for Poles travelling to West Berlin in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see K. Grote and G. Staroste, 'Das polnische Berlin', in E. Babayan et al. (eds), *Europa an der Grenze: Ost Odra, West Oder* (Münster, 2003), pp. 149–57 (here p. 150); and W. Rott, *Die Insel: Eine Geschichte West-Berlins 1948–1990* (Munich, 2009), pp. 404–5.

103. Winkler, *Germany: The Long Road West*, Vol. 2, p. 268.

104. The Czechoslovak side of Czech-GDR relations in the very earliest part of the normalisation era is usefully, albeit briefly, addressed in L. Prieß, V. Kural and M. Wilke, *Die SED und der 'Prager Frühling' 1968: Politik gegen einen 'Sozialismus mit menschlichem Antlitz'* (Berlin, 1996), pp. 265–72. However, nobody seems to have studied the period after 1970 in any depth, at least in a German or English-language study.

105. For a broader view, see the various contributions to M. Grant and B. Ziemann (eds), *Understanding the Imaginary War: Culture, Thought and Nuclear Conflict, 1945–90* (Manchester, 2016); and E. Conze, M. Klimke and J. Varon (eds), *Nuclear Threats, Nuclear Fear, and the Cold War of the 1980s* (Cambridge, 2017).

Fragile Friendship: Polish-Czechoslovak Labour Force Cooperation in the Normalisation Era

Ondřej Klípa

Polak potrafi! (Poles can do it!) was a slogan coined by the new post-1970 Polish leadership with Edward Gierek at its head. Gierek came to office amid the turmoil caused by a deep economic crisis that led to a wave of strikes in Polish ports (the so-called 'Polish December' or *Grudzień*). No less importantly, Polish society was still shaken by the moves undertaken in March 1968 by the hard-line party leadership of Władysław Gomułka against the 'reformists' or, more precisely, the intelligentsia and students.

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When Gomułka was finally forced to resign due to brutal police crackdowns on protesting workers with more than forty killed, the young and vigorous Gierek, trusted on both sides of the Iron Curtain, appeared as a *Deus ex machina* saviour. His famous 'deal' with the Gdańsk shipyard workers—'Will you help? We will!' (*Pomożecie? Pomożemy!*)—marked the beginning of a new era for Poland, with hopes for a brighter future and reconciliation between the ruling party and the wider population.[1]

What a contrast this made with the new Czechoslovak leadership. When Gustáv Husák consolidated his power after taking over from Alexander Dubček in April 1969, it was clear to everyone that there was virtually nothing left of the 'socialism with a human face' pursued by supporters of the Prague Spring. Furthermore, none of the economic and political reforms mooted after August 1968 were launched with the exception of the federalisation of the Czechoslovak state in January 1969. Citizens who had yelled at the Soviet soldiers 'Ivan, go home!' were now forced to express their individual agreement with the invasion. Many accepted the reality that 'they must live within a lie', as Václav Havel later termed it, paying symbolic tribute to the regime in the public sphere, but thinking and speaking differently about it in private.[2] The power of the new leadership rested, at least initially, on Soviet tanks.

How did these two different personalities and their regimes interact with each other? How did they cooperate, and with what outcomes? In this chapter, I aim to answer these questions by looking at an area of economic relations between the two countries which has to date surprisingly escaped systematic academic attention;[3] namely the 'cooperation of labour forces' or, more accurately, the 'export' of Polish workers to Czechoslovakia in the last two decades of state socialism. The lack of scholarly interest in this subject is particularly striking, considering that labour was not only the most successful and highly prized Polish export 'item' (besides coal) in Czechoslovakia, but also that it left behind a highly significant material as well as non-material legacy. The former was composed of giant industrial enterprises, such as chemical factories, sugar plants, grain silos, paper mills, cooling plants, ironworks, meat-works and especially power plants (coal, water and nuclear).[4] As well as these production facilities, Polish 'guest workers' built roads and weirs, modernised top Prague hotels and theatres, and much more besides. Indeed, Czechoslovakia became the prime importer of Polish construction services in the Eastern bloc.[5] Albeit temporary in most cases, this was the largest migration of Poles to the Czech

lands and, on a smaller scale, to Slovakia in modern times, outstripping anything seen before or after the normalisation period.

In this chapter, I will focus mainly on how cross-border cooperation between labour forces arose from officially 'fraternal', yet fragile and mistrustful, relations. My findings stem from archival research in Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany at national, regional and local levels. I will also draw on interviews I conducted with former Polish female workers in the Czech Republic—both those who married Czechs and those who returned to Poland—as well as with Czech nationals who worked alongside Polish 'guest workers', in order to provide further insights into the everyday life of Polish workers in late socialist ČSSR. I conclude by arguing that, in spite of the fragility of Polish-Czechoslovak economic cooperation at the level of high politics, the partnership survived, firstly because Czechoslovak industry relied so heavily on Polish construction and textile workers, secondly because it became increasingly necessary for Polish governments to export products that would revive the nation's moribund economy, including labour, and finally because grass-roots contacts between the Polish migrant workforce and their Czechoslovak hosts created bonds of trust and friendship that compensated for shortcomings in formal inter-state relations.

A Troubled Relationship between 'Slavic Brothers'

Although the Poles are the closest nation in terms of language, their relations with the Czechs (and by extension the Slovaks, who from 1918 formed a common state with the Czechs) were for various historical reasons far from ideal. Even if we stick to the post-1945 period, it is noticeable how quickly border disputes reappeared once the Second World War was over. Only the direct intervention of Stalin prevented these conflicts from escalating and brought both sides to the table, resulting in the new bilateral Treaty on Friendship and Mutual Assistance between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Republic of Poland in 1947. However, the clash of interests between Poland and Czechoslovakia and the strained political atmosphere between the two countries continued into the post-1948 communist era, as seen particularly in the crisis years 1956 and 1968. It was only during the normalisation period that Poland and Czechoslovakia found themselves more or less on the same wavelength, at least when it came to official proclamations and symbolic acts. One example was the unprecedented two-year prison sentence handed to Czech

journalist Jiří Lederer in 1972. Lederer was a well-known reporter on Polish affairs and in 1968 had published a series of critical articles on the 'Polish March' which made him *persona non grata* in Gomułka's Poland. As a result, Husák's regime imprisoned him for engaging in 'public defamation of a state belonging to the world socialist order'.[6]

Indeed, Husák was indebted to Poland because, metaphorically speaking, Polish tanks had helped bring him to power. Nevertheless, as a regime whose authority depended heavily on the support of a foreign power, Husák's administration kept a low profile in the international arena. It behaved rather timidly and nervously, especially in comparison with Gierek's self-confident government. The Czechoslovak authorities were obviously afraid of anything that would jeopardise the local economy or undermine the conservative position adopted by communist leaders throughout the Eastern bloc after 1968. Domestically, the restoration of the economy was a pivotal instrument in building popular consent for Husák's normalised polity.

That is why Czechoslovaks reacted with considerable caution to Gierek's policy of rapprochement with the West in general and with West Germany in particular. Negotiations between Czechoslovakia and West Germany were accompanied by severe difficulties and the so-called Prague Treaty was only signed at the end of 1973, three years after the agreement between Poland and West Germany. The ČSSR also took a cautious approach when Poland opened its borders with East Germany in January 1972, under the project known as 'borders of friendship'. True, it also signed a border agreement with the GDR in the same month, as Matthew Stibbe shows in his contribution to this volume, but not one with Poland. Prague was reluctant to follow this pioneering example of 'proletarian internationalism', not least after the GDR was forced to introduce tariff counter-measures when Polish tourists 'flooded' the German border regions buying up large amounts of consumer goods.[7] In fear of the same scenario, Prague only began to open its borders with Poland to tourists in 1977, following three years of difficult negotiations.

The tensest moment in post-1968 Polish-Czechoslovak relations came in 1980, at the time of the 'Solidarity' crisis. Czechoslovakia's communist rulers were horrified by the economic and political effects of workers' strikes and the official media embarked on a massive anti-Solidarity campaign, which quickly evolved into a more general anti-Polish campaign. The secret police launched operation 'North', aimed primarily at surveillance of Polish citizens and the Polish ethnic minority in the ČSSR. The

'borders of friendship' were clamped tight again, albeit only in December 1981, more than a year after the GDR and USSR had already closed their frontiers with Poland.[8] Although soon after the official recognition of Solidarity in late August 1980 Gierek was replaced as party general secretary by the more hawkish Stanisław Kania, the change failed to satisfy either Moscow or Prague. Kania was criticised for his still relatively mild and compromising stance towards the Solidarity leaders, and, alongside Erich Honecker, Husák became a radical supporter of a 'decisive act' against Poland by the Warsaw Pact.[9]

This attitude changed radically after General Wojciech Jaruzelski came to power and declared martial law in Poland at the end of 1981. Husák's regime became a vocal advocate of the newly established conservative course in Poland. Despite the fact that Poland was already indebted to the ČSSR, Prague transferred substantial financial aid to its neighbour, amounting to 36 million roubles.[10] The Czechoslovak government was particularly eager to show Poland in bright colours again.[11] Nevertheless, the suspicion, and especially the economic fears, did not fade entirely. The 'borders of friendship' remained closed and in the final years of state socialism, anti-Polish sentiments reappeared and indeed expressed themselves more fiercely than at any other time during the normalisation era. Both economic and political factors were at work here. The steep downturn in the Polish economy led to a rise in the cross-border smuggling of consumer goods by Polish (and non-Polish) 'tourists', whose shopping trips to Czechoslovakia created supply problems in the domestic market. At the same time, suspicions were raised by the 'round-table talks' between the Polish government and the opposition movement. For the Husák regime, both developments spelt trouble. Relations between Prague and Warsaw further deteriorated once it became clear that Gorbachev's USSR was no longer willing to play the role of 'policeman' in case of disputes between Eastern bloc countries. Without the restraining hand of Moscow, official Czechoslovak media attacks on the country's northern neighbour became more open and brazen.[12]

At the ideological level, the normalisation of bilateral relations after 1968 was underpinned by a canonical text, 'Lessons Drawn from the Crisis Development in the Party and Society after the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia', adopted in December 1970. Although the document does not mention Poland, it speaks about the 'brotherly community' and 'internationalist ties' that bound the ČSSR and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) with 'other socialist

countries and their fraternal parties'. These ideological relations were now 'fully restored' and indeed 'stronger and deeper than ever before'. It is difficult to assess the reception of this text in wider Czechoslovak society, particularly as 'proletarian internationalism' had been widely discredited by the so-called 'Brezhnev doctrine' and its violent enforcement in August 1968. The internationalist claim to the 'equality of all socialist nations' had been a key feature of the ideas of the Prague Spring, but the USSR and other Warsaw Pact allies had betrayed this concept when they invaded and occupied a fellow socialist country. Against this background, even the party's post-1969 leaders, especially the younger cohort, found it difficult to internalise ideological tenets such as 'proletarian internationalism'.[13]

On the other hand, one of the things that surely brought Prague and Warsaw closer together, at least in the early normalisation period, was their common desire to increase the rate of economic growth in their respective countries. If Gierek was to retain his domestic political legitimacy, and Husák to establish his, they knew that they would have to persuade ordinary citizens that they were catching up with the 'consumer paradise' in the West. This could only be done by improving the availability and affordability of key products—televisions, cars, tropical fruits, vacations abroad and, in the Czechoslovak case, weekend houses—all of which by the 1970s had become symbols of the 'good life'. Experiments with economic reform in the 1960s, associated with Włodzimierz Brus and Oskar Lange in Poland, Ota Šik in Czechoslovakia and even Walter Ulbricht in the GDR, had failed to reverse the trend towards declining productivity across the Soviet bloc. New solutions were urgently needed.

However, although they shared the same desire to improve living standards, the two regimes soon diverged in the ways they sought to achieve it. The circumstances and atmosphere in which these two new leaderships were born at the beginning of the 1970s obviously influenced Gierek's approach to economics more than Husák's. East-West détente, symbolised above all by Willy Brandt's new *Ostpolitik*, as well as the 'dollar glut' in Western banks, gave Gierek the opportunity to enter the global financial market. Before long he had introduced Poles to his brave economic panacea: foreign credits. In times of economic upswing in the Western hemisphere, the loans were cheap. Western banks happily served new clients from the Eastern bloc who helped relieve them of their cash surplus. Even the world oil crisis in 1973 did not do much to reverse this trend, except that Middle Eastern petrodollars now fuelled the cash surplus in Western (mostly London-based) banks.[14] And Gierek had a plan to

manage the debt, which seemed sound and plausible. The increased industrial investment would boost production, which would be partially sent back and sold in the West. The quality of Polish products would be guaranteed because Western production licenses would be bought for a part of the credits.[15] Competitive prices would be achieved thanks to low labour and energy costs in Poland. However, things evolved quite differently and already by 1974 it was clear that Gierek's grand-scale project had failed.[16]

The ambitious nature of the Polish programme for growth and the self-confidence of its leader were not mirrored in Czechoslovakia. Under normalisation, the latter set less store by East-West détente and opted for rather low-profile activities on the global financial market. For example, it bought fewer licenses and trusted more in its own research and development capacities (and Brezhnev's willingness to help) rather than increasing its dependence on the 'evil' West. Bringing with it entanglement in the global market economy, the new Polish economic policy was perceived in Prague with caution and mistrust.[17] In the short term, it allowed Poland to reach a higher level of industrial development that threatened Czechoslovak interests. The old bilateral trade model, whereby Czechoslovak machines were exchanged for Polish food, coal and other raw materials, was beginning to break down, and both countries were forced to rethink what they hoped to achieve in a utilitarian sense from economic cooperation.

POLISH BUILDERS AND TEXTILE WORKERS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

There was one aspect of mutual trade links in the 1970s that did promise higher dividends; namely, the relatively recently launched 'labour force cooperation', as it was known in official rhetoric. There were basically two main types of Polish labour operating in state socialist Czechoslovakia. The first was Polish citizens—the vast majority of them women—employed directly by Czechoslovak companies. The beginning of this programme dates back to 1962 when an agreement was signed between two border regions in north-east Bohemia, on the one hand, and a neighbouring district of south-west Poland (the Wrocław Voivodship), on the other. The workers were usually very young (some of them had not even reached the age of eighteen). They were typically unskilled women who commuted daily or weekly from their homes in the Polish border regions. Polish

workers in Czechoslovak enterprises enjoyed conditions very similar to the local workforce, except for some 'security' restrictions—at the beginning of the programme they could not move freely on ČSSR territory—and wages. The Poles were paid according to Czechoslovak rates, but about half their pay was transferred to Poland and given to the workers in Polish złoty. In this way, the Prague authorities protected supplies to their domestic market. It meant that the Poles could not buy up those food types and other goods in Czechoslovak stores that were only available in short quantity in Poland. But it also benefitted the overall Czechoslovak budget since the transfers became a part of the bilateral trade balance. Because the Eastern bloc countries' currencies were not internationally convertible, trade imbalances could only be harmonised through local bilateral cash transfers. Thus, since communist Czechoslovakia (with some exceptions) exported to Poland more than it imported, the partial remuneration of Polish workers in złoty improved the balance. So did the transfer of all healthcare and social security payments as well as the proceeds from income tax, which were—in contrast to all other foreign workers in the ČSSR—sent to the country of origin too.

What had started as an experimental project between two border regions evolved during the normalisation period into the largest labour force cooperation in the entire Eastern bloc. With some 75,000 Polish workers (most of whom were women) employed in Czechoslovak enterprises, the ČSSR was the number one importer of Polish 'labour migrants' on the basis of bilateral agreements.[18] Almost thirty years of the programme created highly fertile ground for many personal contacts that often resulted in long-term friendships and thousands of mixed marriages. Although the notion of *druzhba* (internationalist friendship) might have been just a game of pretence for those operating at the highest levels of the party and state apparatus, genuine relationships flourished at the grass-roots.[19] As one of my respondents living her whole life in the city of Wałbrzych (Lower Silesia, near the Czech border) put it: 'If it were still possible, I would definitely come back [to work in Czechoslovakia]. I was lucky to work in a great team and had a very nice foreman. These were the best years of my life'.[20]

In contrast to the relatively rich memories, emotions and personal relationships nurtured by the mostly female Polish labour force that worked on Czechoslovak territory between the 1960s and 1980s, virtually no material reminders of their presence have survived into the post-communist era. Since the Polish women were mainly employed in the textile and glass

industries, their products vanished or, if they still exist, can no longer be definitely linked to the factories they worked in. Moreover, the Czechoslovak textile industry as a whole, once one of the most robust sectors of the economy, struggled to survive the post-1990 transition to capitalism. Many companies failed, and the old factory buildings were either torn down or abandoned and allowed to go to ruin.

The second category of Polish labour migrants to the ČSSR also officially began arriving in the 1960s. In order to boost economic growth, Comecon, the organisation for economic cooperation within the Soviet bloc, was 'resurrected' in 1962. Several multilateral agreements were signed as a result. Among them was the cumbersomely titled 'General Terms for Assembling and Providing Other Technical Services Related to the Delivery of Machines and Equipment among Foreign Trade Companies of Comecon Member States', better known simply as 'assembly agreements'.[21] These accords were integrated into periodic (usually five-year) Czechoslovak-Polish trade agreements and served as a legal basis for 'building and assembling services' (*stavebně-montážní práce*) of various scales. As early as 1965, the Czechoslovak authorities requested the completion of turn-key projects by Polish construction crews (so-called 'complex brigades'), a plea which was at first rejected by Poland due to their own limited capacities.[22] However, Warsaw soon changed its mind and the first sizeable turn-key project carried out by Polish firms in Czechoslovakia— the most advanced and largest Czechoslovak sugar plant near the town of Hrochův Týnec in eastern Bohemia—was built between 1967 and 1969. A similar project was launched soon afterwards in Hrušovany nad Jevišovkou in southern Moravia.

The builders were usually skilled men, often married and typically older than the women in the first category. Most had experience of working on similar construction projects in Poland and other countries. This is why they were routinely referred to as 'professionals' in official Czechoslovak documents. During their stay in the ČSSR, they remained employees of Polish companies, but were represented by 'foreign trade' entities, such as Budimex, Cekop, Elektrim, Chemadex or Polservice. They received significantly higher wages than ordinary construction workers either in Czechoslovakia or Poland. For instance, Polish workers building a silo in the ČSSR in the mid-1970s earned 5600 koruna per month, whereas locals got a mere 2800.[23] This is why the construction crews sent abroad were regarded as the 'aristocracy' of the Polish working class.[24] And it is also why Polish firms could carefully select the most skilled labourers, and

indeed those with the right 'social capital'. It is no surprise that many were members of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and were deemed capable of serving as 'ambassadors' for the Polish nation abroad. Czechoslovakia paid a lump sum for these projects directly to the relevant Polish 'foreign trade' company and since labour costs were high and the turn-key projects included not only technical equipment, but usually also all the building material, such as timber, cement and even sand, the projects were extremely costly.[25]

Unlike the first category of immigrant labour, the male construction workers lived a rather isolated life while on ČSSR territory. They were housed and worked largely independently of their Czechoslovak surroundings. These elite mobile construction crews led a rather nomadic existence, being sent from one site to another, and from one country to another. Thus, unlike the female workers, they could hardly plan any extended stay in the ČSSR. As a result of both the spatial isolation and the lack of prospects for long-term work in Czechoslovakia, they were less motivated to engage in close contact with the locals.[26] However, the material traces of their presence can still be seen in the concrete monstrosities that dominate the Czech and Slovak landscape in many areas.

The recruitment of the first category of workers was, at least at the beginning, a win-win project. It helped Poland to alleviate its female unemployment problem and, at the same time, relieved Czechoslovakia's far-reaching labour shortages.[27] As important and profitable cooperation, it survived the political earthquake of 1968. At the time of the Warsaw Pact invasion, about 10,000 Polish workers (the vast majority of them women) were directly employed by Czechoslovak companies. At the same time, several hundred male construction workers were contracted to build the two large sugar plants mentioned above. Since Poland took the most active part in the invasion after the Soviet Union, public opinion quickly turned against the Poles, especially in the regions occupied by the Polish army. These were precisely the regions where many of the Polish factory workers were based. Thus, the crowds' anger often turned against the unarmed and vulnerable Polish women so that their work was interrupted, and they returned, or were recalled, to Poland.[28] However, after a couple of weeks, most of them came back or new workers from Poland took their place, so that it was soon 'business as usual'.[29] Male construction workers experienced the invasion in quite different settings. Due to their above-mentioned isolation from their Czechoslovak surroundings, the Polish 'villages' were transformed both physically and politically into complete

island outposts.[30] But as with the Polish women workers, once the situation had 'normalised' after the first few weeks of occupation, they carried on in an unchanged manner.[31]

The High Price of Friendship

This flourishing cooperation, unsurprisingly, captured the attention of both incoming leaders of the neighbouring states in 1969–1970. Expansion was seen as essential, both to kick-start economic growth and to show a willingness to restore bilateral relations by drawing a line under the events of 1968.[32] However, negotiators very quickly faced new obstacles, caused largely by rapid economic changes in Poland. Gierek´s innovative policy of seeking Western credits had two effects that influenced Polish-Czechoslovak collaboration. First, the huge investment fuelled by the influx of Western credits created 2.2 million new jobs in Poland, including those suitable for women.[33] To fulfill his promises, Gierek also significantly increased wages, while the costs of essential commodities did not begin to rise until 1975. As a result, real wages improved so that Poland's light industry workers earned—probably for the first time in post-war history—a similar wage to their colleagues in Czechoslovakia. In turn, the incentive to seek jobs in the ČSSR decreased as living standards rose at home and unemployment was virtually wiped out.

The second effect was the Polish need to increase revenues from all branches of its export industries in order to pay back its debts. That is why Poland's interest in maximising revenues from its 'export' of labour skyrocketed within just a few years. From September 1971, Polish negotiators began to push for the transfer of all new workers onto contracts based on the more profitable trade agreements, but the cost of this type of labour force was too high for the Czechoslovak government.[34] Eventually, after long negotiations accompanied by openly stated disappointment from each side and Polish threats to withdraw all its workers from the ČSSR, the two states reached a compromise. A new inter-governmental accord was signed in 1972, whereby the bulk of the labour force cooperation remained focused on the first category of workers who continued to be employed by ČSSR enterprises on the basis of bilateral agreements. Even so, the Czechoslovaks had to pay a fixed sum (or so-called 'recruitment compensation') for each newly recruited Polish worker who took up employment in the ČSSR. This sum increased over time.

Gierek's new economic policy caused considerable problems for Prague. Not only were Czechoslovak enterprises confronted with increased costs but also with a much smaller number of Polish newcomers than estimated. Like other command economies, Czechoslovakia depended on accurate economic projections for its long-term plans. In 1970 Polish negotiators suggested that 100–150,000 Polish workers would be available for overseas projects.[35] These estimates were periodically revised downwards, but the false expectations continued. Eventually, the flow of Polish 'labour migrants' increased by only a few thousand, reaching 21,700 in the peak year of 1973. Thus, the fulfillment of production targets for the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1971–1975) in factories dependent on Polish labour was placed in jeopardy.[36] This was not the fault of planners on the Polish side. They could not have known in advance about the sudden credit-driven increase in the domestic employment rate after Gierek came to power. Nevertheless, a certain bitterness is evident in the archival documents concerning 'labour cooperation' in the normalisation period.

The disappointment was felt not only by the Czechoslovaks. Warsaw expressed the same feelings because the revenues from the 'recruitment compensation' agreed in 1972 were deemed unsatisfactory and hardly made up for the loss of workers who were now urgently needed in the burgeoning domestic economy. That is why Poland claimed in the mid-1970s that 'the employment of our workers in the ČSSR and the GDR based on the current governmental agreements is, as a matter of fact, an expression of assistance to these countries and it does not bring us any real profit'.[37]

However, this mutual sense of dissatisfaction did not prevent the two countries from continuing the programme of 'labour cooperation'. First, Czechoslovakia soon understood that having at least some Polish workers was better than nothing. The textile industry was extremely unpopular among the local workforce due to poor working conditions (noisy machinery, heat in summer, cold in winter, dust, chemical exhalations, heavy loads) and the meagre wages.[38] At the same time, Czechoslovak textile products, as well as glass, jewelry and some other light industrial products, were traditionally successful in Western markets and generated much-needed hard currency. Moreover, maintaining relatively costly employees was, in the end, still cheaper than the only other option to keep up production rates, namely carrying out structural modernisation of what had become the permanently neglected light industrial sector.

As far as the second type of Polish worker is concerned, the development was similar. Despite the enormous price of the construction works, the number of building projects carried out by skilled Polish labourers rose steadily. Nevertheless, it seems that the authorities in Prague came to terms with this fact because their grumbling almost disappears from the archival documents. According to Czech economic historians, the low productivity of building companies in the ČSSR was one of the critical problems faced by the state socialist economy because it slowed down investment and hindered growth.[39] Poles were not only needed for new projects, but also to take over and complete ones already under way that local firms were unable to finish.[40] At the beginning of the 1970s, Polish builders were working on about forty projects in Czechoslovakia.[41] Here, unlike in the case of the Polish women employed mostly in textile factories, the Czechoslovaks got more or less what they paid for.[42] There was none of the employee turnover or absenteeism that often accompanied the poorly paid women.[43] Besides the individual workers' financial motivations, these specialised Polish construction firms were used to operating globally, including in capitalist states, so that their 'culture of work' adjusted to highly competitive conditions. Early reports by the Czechoslovak authorities on the Polish construction projects spoke admiringly of the unprecedented speed with which the work was done, as well as the high quality of the final product and the extended guarantees offered by the Polish companies on a voluntary basis. In 1972, Jaroslav Nechanický, who controlled Polish firms constructing roads in the northern Bohemia mountain district, reported that the Poles had finished the roads three times more quickly than expected. He admitted that 'the building pace—compared to our conditions—was unusually fast'.[44]

The satisfaction of the Czechoslovak authorities with Polish builders was due not only to the relatively smooth cooperation on 'market' conditions that, in fact, erased some of the high costs.[45] Some sources indirectly indicate that an extra benefit might also have come from the genuinely modernising effect of Polish technologies on the Czechoslovak economy. During the 1970s, Poland bought 450 licenses from Western companies.[46] At the same time, Polish firms operating in Czechoslovakia equipped plenty of construction projects, such as sugar plants, power plants and chemical factories, with 'high-end' technologies. Polish firms were often explicitly tasked with the 'modernisation' of a pre-existing industrial base. Hence, the export of Polish labour not only 'filled a gap' in the construction industry of a neighbouring country, but also brought in a range of

new technologies—most probably with a significant component of Western know-how—which represented the best of what was then available in the Eastern bloc.[47] And, no less important for Prague, all this was purchased with 'soft' currency.

The industrial facilities erected by Polish construction workers, again in contrast to the products made by Polish textile workers, were doubly attractive for the Czechoslovak communist regime because they were themselves means of production, not consumer goods. Moreover, they were the newest, most modern and biggest, as well as highly visible and durable objects. Hence, they fulfilled an important propaganda purpose, underpinning the legitimacy of Husák in the eyes of ordinary citizens as someone who developed the country and cared for the economy. The most significant projects were entitled 'enterprises of Czechoslovak-Polish friendship' and larger factories built by Polish firms were photographed and received much publicity in the media. 'Grand openings', attended by high-ranking figures from regional and national governments as well as senior managers from the companies involved, were a matter of course. The Polish Information and Cultural Centre in Prague prepared a couple of exhibitions of the most important Polish firms providing construction services in Czechoslovakia (Budimex, Cekop). 'Days of Polish culture' were organised in towns where the facilities were located, and selected Polish workers received state honours.[48] In other words, the unveiling of industrial enterprises built by Polish firms through trade agreements created an opportunity to present bilateral relations between friendly socialist nations as they were officially supposed to be.[49]

The End of the Affair

Although by the 1980s Czechoslovakia was performing more successfully in economic terms than its northern neighbour and was politically more stable, Poland still behaved, if not as the more robust, then definitely as the more assertive partner when it came to labour force cooperation. In two new agreements signed in 1984 and 1989, Warsaw was able to demand further increases in the 'compensation' payments for the mostly female Polish workers employed in Czechoslovak enterprises. Indeed, Poland pushed the ČSSR to accept the fresh demands by threatening to withdraw all Polish employees. This was in spite of the fact that Czechoslovakia also provided Poland with substantial financial aid. As Alena Alamgir notes, at that time 'the relationship between the

Czechoslovak and the Polish officials involved in the worker exchanges was frayed, conceptualized as something of a tug-of-war, and filled with suspicion'.[50] As an example, she quotes a 1984 Czechoslovak report which opined: 'In an effort to secure more advantageous conditions than the [previous] treaty mandates, the Polish side pretended (*předstírala*) already in 1983 that it was having difficulties with securing workers [for projects in Czechoslovakia]'.[51]

Once again, as in the early 1970s, Warsaw pressurised the ČSSR to reduce its reliance on workers brought in via bilateral agreements in favour of the more costly 'export' of labour under the trade agreements.[52] For instance, if any worker recruited by a trade agreement had previously been employed in a given enterprise, this firm was forbidden to ask for workers on the basis of bilateral agreements in the future. Or, to cite an even stricter measure, whole branches of the economy, such as forestry, coal-mining, metallurgy and, of course, the building industry, were simply excluded from employment on bilateral agreements, in order to ring-fence them for the more expensive type of labour contracts.[53]

The available archival sources do not reveal whether Warsaw was ultimately completely satisfied with the programme, but its development followed Polish objectives more than it did Czechoslovak ones. The financial benefits for individual workers as well as the direct payments to the Polish treasury were steadily growing, and the number of labourers employed in Czechoslovak factories was, again in accord with Warsaw's demands, falling.[54] The number of these workers dropped from 10,000 in 1985 to some 4500 by 1989. Moving in the opposite direction, the second type of Polish labour force in the ČSSR grew exponentially—to the satisfaction of the Polish government. Although the Czechoslovak authorities consistently deemed the 'import' of Polish builders on the basis of trade agreements to be too expensive, the total had reached a staggering 33,000 by 1989.[55]

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to interpret Czechoslovakia's behaviour as a case of pure submission towards its more self-confident northern counterpart. It was important for Prague to cooperate with, and thus support, Jaruzelski's conservative regime in Poland, not least given the liberalising tendencies in the USSR after 1985. It was vital, too, to keep the domestic economic 'ball rolling' at almost any cost. In fact, official Polish-Czechoslovak diplomatic relations in the normalisation era could be regarded as a marked improvement on how they had been in the earlier state socialist period, not to mention in the years before 1945. Only after

1989—when genuine friends from the so-called Polish-Czechoslovak Solidarity movement (activists involved in Charter 77 and the Workers' Defence Committee, KOR) replaced communists in the highest political positions—did relations shift to an even more cordial level.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have depicted the nature of the 'friendship' between two neighbouring states under normalisation. The example of labour force cooperation demonstrates that good relations were difficult to maintain in practice.[56] Although labour cooperation survived the crisis of 1968 and increased rapidly during the late state-socialist period, it lost much of the original win-win appeal that it had enjoyed in the 1960s. Both countries felt that they had been deceived by the other, albeit with varying degrees of intensity. However, in addition to political considerations (obedience to the Kremlin, the need to conform to the doctrine of strategic and ideological friendship between fraternal socialist regimes), there were financial benefits to be had on both sides and this kept the fragile compact alive.

The catchphrase *Polak potrafi* [Poles can do it!] revealed two meanings in the labour force cooperation. First, there was the unquestionable ability of Poland to assert the upper hand in the partnership. Although Poland's economic strength was indisputably weaker during the whole period under review, one can hardly resist the feeling that Warsaw successfully pursued its own agenda on prices and overall conditions for the 'guest' workers against the will of the less self-confident partner, Czechoslovakia. The second meaning concerns the material output and performance of the Polish labourers. Despite complaints about high rates of absenteeism and employee turnover, it is a fact that Czechoslovak companies could scarcely have survived without Polish women workers. They did physically very demanding jobs that locals for the most part did not wish to do. As for the Polish builders, one of my Czech respondents spontaneously reacted with an outburst of admiration when I mentioned them: 'Yes, I remember them very well… We would watch how they began their work in our village. Every morning, at six o'clock, standing in line, wearing helmets, with all tools ready, heads up, like soldiers! It was something! We had never seen anything like that'.[57]

The Poles undoubtedly made an important contribution to the Czechoslovak economy under normalisation. Like it or not, their power plants, to take just one example, still belong to the core energy

infrastructure of the Czech Republic. Another instance would be the two biggest grain silos that are used as storage facilities for national food reserves. Together with several thousand 'mixed' marriages and their offspring (for whom there are no reliable figures), the industrial plants built by the Poles are a noteworthy legacy of Polish-Czechoslovak relations during the normalisation era and are part of the industrial heritage of state socialism in post-1945 Central Europe more generally. Above all, they provide evidence of much warmer and sincere ties between the two nations at the grass-roots level than at the level of inter-state relations.[58]

Notes

1. Even so, compared to the Polish 'October' in 1956, when Gomułka came to power, there were no hopes for political reform, and the intelligentsia was permanently lost for the regime. See, for instance, A. Michnik, 'A New Evolutionism', in A. Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley, CA, 1987), pp. 135–48.
2. V. Havel, 'The Power of the Powerless' (1978), transl. by P. Wilson and reproduced in V. Havel, *Living in Truth: Twenty-Two Essays Published on the Occasion of the Award of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel*, edited by J. Vladislav (London, 1987) [1986], pp. 36–122 (here p. 45).
3. One of the few exceptions is D. Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia? Migracje zagraniczne z Polski 1949–1989* (Warsaw, 2010).
4. E. Marek, *Zatrudnienie pracowników polskich za granicą* (Warsaw, 1991), p. 40.
5. Ibid., p. 39.
6. See J. Slatina, 'Jsme tu všichni přechodně, ač někteří dočasně', *Listy*, no. 6 (December 1980), p. 8.
7. M. Keck-Szajbel, 'Shop around the Bloc: Trader Tourism and Its Discontents on the East German-Polish Border', in P. Bren and M. Neuburger (eds), *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Postwar Eastern Europe* (New York, 2012), pp. 374–92.
8. See P. Blažek, 'Československo a polská krize 1980–1981', *Securitas Imperii*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2012), pp. 58–75; and Stola, *Kraj*, p. 304.
9. Blažek, 'Československo', p. 62. This of course mirrored Gomułka's attitude towards Czechoslovakia in 1968.
10. A. Szczepańska, 'Oficjalne relacje polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1980–1989 w świetle raportów ambasady PRL w Pradze', *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, vol. XXV, no. LIV (2010–2014), pp. 67–82 (here p. 70). There was indirect aid, too, such as free delivery of medical and industrial goods. The Czechoslovak government had to refuse Warsaw's

quest for aid in US dollars because the West imposed sanctions (a hard currency blockade) on the whole of the Eastern bloc due to the Solidarity crisis. See National Archive of the Czech Republic (henceforth NA), f. Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR/ČSFR, inventory number not available, 'Zpráva k žádosti o poskytnutí další pomoci PLR', 29 January 1982.

11. Szczepańska, 'Oficjalne relacje', p. 69.

12. Ibid., pp. 78–9.

13. In her analysis of memoirs of top-ranking KSČ figures written after 1989, French historian Françoise Mayer found striking ignorance and even disdain for Marxist ideas. Without any signs of regret for their former activities, the authors presented themselves as proud but pragmatic communists, not 'blinded by ideology or propaganda'. Mayer noted that 'ideology' was associated in the memoirs entirely negatively with pre-August 1968 politicians—both 'Stalinists' of the 1950s and 'reformists' of the Prague Spring. See F. Mayer, *Češi a jejich komunismus: Paměť a politická identita* (Prague, 2009), p. 129.

14. B. Pula, *Globalization under and after Socialism: The Evolution of Transnational Capital in Central and Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA, 2018), pp. 74–8.

15. Ibid., p. 86. This plan was also made feasible by a simultaneous relaxing of the COCOM restrictions that allowed Western technologies to be partly exported to the East.

16. Not only internal factors (bad investment 'eating' a large share of the credits) but also external developments played a role. The economic slowdown after 1973 in the West caused falling consumption that led to an increased need for competitiveness. In addition, the second oil crisis in 1979 fuelled an escalation of investment rates that made new credits extremely expensive. See Pula, *Globalization*, pp. 87 and 98; and J. F. Staniłko, 'Tęsknota za "drugą Polską"', in K. Rybiński (ed.), *Dekada Gierka: Wnioski dla obecnego okresu modernizacji Polski* (Warsaw, 2011), pp. 47–56 (here p. 51).

17. Anna Szczepańska, in her valuable analysis of documents from the Polish embassy in Prague, often uses the term 'distrust' for the decade of the 1980s. See Szczepańska, 'Oficjalne relacje', p. 67. By contrast, I would argue that distrust was already evident from the very beginning of the 1970s.

18. The number is calculated from my own estimations combining yearly statistics on Poles employed in Czechoslovakia with turnover rates. The second largest 'importer' of Polish workers was the GDR, with some 30–40,000 Polish workers—see Stola, *Kraj,* p. 275. Only in the 1980s did the number of Vietnamese workers—coming especially after the new bilateral agreement signed in 1979—begin to reach the same level as the Poles.

19. This is also the finding of Rachel Applebaum in respect to Czechoslovak-Soviet relations. See her recent book *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca, NY, 2019), and her contribution to this volume.

20. Irena C., interview with author, digital recording, Wałbrzych, Poland, 31 May 2017. Irena C. worked in a Czechoslovak textile factory in Náchod between 1972 and 1991.

21. A. Korbonski, 'Comecon', *International Conciliation,* no. 549, September 1964, pp. 1–62 (here p. 27).

22. NA, f. Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR/ČSFR, inventory number not available, Zpráva o výsledku jednání předsedů obou částí Československo-polského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckotechnickou spolupráci, předloženo 6.5.1965'. A turn-key project is one in which the building company looks after all aspects of the job, from design and procurement of materials to construction, snag fixing and completion.

23. 'Opolskie Przedsiębiorstwo Budownictwa Przemysłowego. Słuchacie Jedynki!', 19 May 2012, at https://nto.pl/opolskie-przedsiebiorstwo-budownictwa-przemyslowego-sluchacie-jedynki/ar/4498887 (last accessed 1 August 2021).

24. These Polish workers usually obtained half of their salary in 'Pekao bones', which were vouchers for special shops selling luxury (Western or local) goods in Poland. See Stola, *Kraj*, p. 277. In this context, there was a popular saying in Poland: 'To get oneself "exported" is to make a fortune' (Załapać się na eksport—to wygrać los). See Marek, *Zatrudnienie*, p. 51.

25. It was calculated in 1975 that the foreign workers on trade agreements were more than twice as expensive as the workers employed through bilateral agreements. See NA, f. Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR/ČSFR, inventory number not available, 'Zpráva o výsledcích předběžných'.

26. For a description of what life was like for the Polish construction crews abroad, see E. Kovács, 'Double Informality—Polish Workers in the Beremend Lime Factory (1979–1981)', in W. Borodziej, J. Kochanowski and J. von Puttkamer (eds), *'Schleichwege': Inoffizielle Begegnungen sozialistischer Staatsbürger zwischen 1956 und 1989* (Cologne, 2010), pp. 286–304.

27. The historical and economic factors behind the differences between the post-war labour market in the two neighbouring states—and in their border regions in particular—are discussed in detail in O. Klípa, 'Escaping the Double Burden: Female Polish Workers in State Socialist Czechoslovakia', *Slavic Review*, vol. 78, no. 4 (2019), pp. 1009–27.

28. J. Kalous, 'Reakce československého obyvatelstva na polskou účast v intervenci 1968', in P. Blažek, Ł. Kamiński and R. Vévoda (eds), *Polsko a*

Československo v roce 1968: Sborník příspěvků z mezinárodní vědecké konference, Varšava, 4.–5. září 2003 (Prague, 2006), pp. 172–201 (here p. 191).

29. O. Šumberová and R. Volf, 'Nebyly ztráty na životech', *Politika*, vol. 68, no. 4, 19 September 1968, pp. 16–18.

30. Archive of Modern Records, Warsaw (henceforth AAN), f. Archiwum KC PZPR, Wydział Zagraniczny, i. n. LXXVI/6, 'Informacja o sytuacji na budowie cukrowni w Hrochowie Tyńcu, Hrochuv Tynec', 27 August 1968.

31. J. Inovecký, 'Príčina nie je v socializme', *Roľnícke noviny*, 22 October 1969.

32. Leaving aside its own pragmatic interest in resetting bilateral economic ties, the USSR's apparent concern was to harmonise COMECON relations against the background of continuous tensions with 'rebellious' Romania. See K. Kaplan, *Rada vzájemné hospodářské pomoci a Československo 1957–1967* (Prague, 2002), pp. 195–7.

33. A. Karpiński, 'Drugie uprzemysłowienie Polski—prawda czy mit?', in Rybiński (ed.), *Dekada Gierka*, pp. 13–26 (here p. 17).

34. AAN, f. Archiwum KC PZPR, Wydział Zagraniczny, i. č. LXXVI/6, 'Informacja w sprawie zatrudnienia pracowników polskich w przedsiębiorstwach CSRS i NRD', 17 January 1975.

35. Ibid.

36. NA, f. KSČ – Ústřední výbor 1945–1989, inventory number not available, 'Zpráva o zaměstnávání zahraničních pracovníků v ČSSR', FMPSV, 27 February 1978.

37. AAN, f. Archiwum KC PZPR, Wydział Zagraniczny, i. č. LXXVI/6, 'Informacja w sprawie zatrudnienia pracowników polskich'.

38. The low wages paid in state socialist textile industries were no secret. Many companies openly admitted that their inability to pay more was one of the primary causes of the chronic labour shortages in this sector. See, for instance, Státní oblastní archiv v Zámrsku, f. n. p. Veba, i. č. 382, 'Opatření k informaci o polských pracovních silách za rok 1972', 17 May 1973.

39. J. Faltus and V. Průcha, *Hospodářské dějiny* (Prague, 1992), p. 137.

40. 'Polský klíč k tušimické dvojce', *Rudé právo*, 27 August 1971.

41. B. Durka, *Sąsiedzka współpraca PRL – CSRS* (Warsaw, 1986), p. 50.

42. Of course, Polish turn-key projects in Czechoslovakia did occasionally experience problems with meeting deadlines or sticking within budget. Reliance on materials supplied from the workers' home country left construction projects vulnerable to breakdowns in the supply chain. However, the odd mishap here and there did not impact on the Czechoslovaks' positive opinion of Polish construction companies in general.

43. Polish women workers received about 2000 koruna (crowns) per month compared to the 5000–6000 koruna earned by their male counterparts on turn-key projects. See Marek, *Zatrudnienie*, p. 40.

44. J. Kozák, 'Polen bauen gute Strassen', *Večerník Praha*, 28 April 1972. (I found this article in the Press Archive of the Herder Institute in Marburg, where it was in German translation)

45. Paying a lower wage to a local worker, but having to wait three times longer for completion, was not a cheaper option.

46. P. Bożyk, 'Cywilizacyjne skutki "otwarcia" Polski na Zachód', in Rybiński (ed.), *Dekada Gierka*, pp. 5–15 (here p. 8).

47. Archival documents from one of the sugar plants built by the Poles reveal that many of the key technologies were either licensed or directly purchased from the West. It was common practice for both Polish and local Czechoslovak companies to do this. See Moravian Regional Archive in Brno, f. Jihomoravské cukrovary, n.p., i. n. 1628/257, 'Zpráva se závěrečným návrhem na uvedení nového cukrovaru v Hrušovanech n. Jev. do trvalého provozu podle vlád. nař. č. 8/1956 Sb. a předpisů je doplňujících', 1972. In other instances, too, Polish firms equipped their final industrial products for export within the Eastern bloc with expensive Western technologies. See M. Krajewski, *Historia gospodarcza Polski do 1989 roku: zarys problematyki* (Włocławek, 2000), p. 510.

48. Z. Peterová, 'Bylo na ně spolehnutí', *Zemědělské noviny*, 19 July 1984.

49. Although the authorities and the media presented bilateral relations at this level in broader terms than just ice-cold economic calculation, they usually did not use the language of 'proletarian internationalism'. The trope of internationalism was more frequently used in relation to Cuban and Vietnamese workers, in other words when economically asymmetrical relations were in play. Such rhetoric also merged with paternalist statements and clear hints of older colonial mentalities based on the notion of the 'white-man's burden' or the European 'civilising mission'. In contrast to non-white foreign labour, Poles were seen as being at a similar level of economic development to Czechoslovaks and—in case of the construction workers—provided the host country with highly professional services. Typical terms used to describe 'labour cooperation' between the two neighbours were thus 'the assistance of Polish comrades' or 'collaboration between partners'.

50. A. K. Alamgir, '"Inappropriate Behavior": Labor Control and the Polish, Cuban and Vietnamese Workers in Czechoslovakia', in M. Siefert (ed.), *Labor in State-Socialist Europe, 1945–1989: Contributions to a History of Work* (Budapest, 2019), pp. 99–122 (here p. 108).

51. Ibid. I have found similar statements in other reports.

52. NA, f. Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR/ČSFR, inventory number not available, 'Zpráva k návrhu MPMSV PLR na změnu Ujednání mezi FMPSV ČSSR a MPMSV PLR o zaměstnávání polských pracovníků v čs.

organizacích v pohraničních oblastech a v jiných výjimečných případech ze dne 16. 5. 1978', 1984.

53. NA, f. Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR/ČSFR, inventory number not available, 'Informace o zaměstnávání polských pracovníků v čs. organizacích v roce 1983', April 1983.

54. They were mostly replaced by incoming Vietnamese workers.

55. Marek, *Zatrudnienie*, p. 39. It was common, especially in the 1980s, for Poles not only to be invited to construct new buildings, but also to maintain and repair existing industrial plants, so that the dependence on Polish capacities became quite striking.

56. Similar problems bedeviled 'labour cooperation' between Poland and the GDR, which was also far from smooth in practice. See J. Zatlin, '"Polnische Wirtschaft"—"deutsche Ordnung"? Zum Umgang mit Polen in der DDR', in C. Th. Müller and P. G. Poutrus (eds), *Ankunft-Alltag-Ausreise: Migration und interkulturelle Begegnung in der DDR-Gesellschaft* (Cologne, 2005), pp. 295–315 (here p. 307).

57. Milan N., interview with author, digital recording, Mladá Boleslav, Czechia, 26 June 2020. Milan N. was deputy director of a Czechoslovak company that took over the silo after Polish workers had built it.

58. Admittedly, this was more the case with the Polish women working in Czechoslovak enterprises than the Polish male construction workers. Nevertheless, the latter group also established a surprising number of friendships with Czechoslovak citizens, given the socially and spatially isolating conditions they lived in.

A Different Socialism: Czechoslovak Normalisation and Yugoslavia

Ondřej Vojtěchovský and Jan Pelikán

When on 9 August 1968, the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito landed at Prague's Ruzyně airport, hundreds of people enthusiastically greeted him. Thousands of others lined the route to Prague Castle with Yugoslav flags and cried out 'Long Live Tito, Long Live Yugoslavia', paying tribute to the 'old friend of Czechoslovakia'. Crowds gathered spontaneously in the courtyard of the Castle, and while Tito was received by President Ludvík Svoboda in the Castle palace, they demanded Tito's appearance. Tito then gave a brief, improvised speech from the balcony.[1] Tito's visit to Prague was perceived by the Czechoslovak public as support for the reform process in the difficult moments after the pressure exerted on the Czechoslovak leadership by the Soviet Union and its allies during the recent negotiations in Čierna nad Tisou and Bratislava. His symbolic gesture seemed at the time to avert the danger of intervention and stabilise Czechoslovakia's position vis-à-vis the other countries of the 'socialist camp'. However, apart from very general proclamations, it did not provide any guarantees

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to Alexander Dubček's leadership. 'The friendship between Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia is so great that no treaty is needed', said Tito at the closing press conference in answer to a question from a reporter regarding the possible conclusion of a formal pact.[2]

Nevertheless, Yugoslavia's critical reaction to the invasion on 21 August 1968 again seemed to indicate that the country stood firmly on the side of Czechoslovakia and its reform efforts. The resolutions of the Yugoslav League of Communists (*Savez komunista Jugoslavije*—SKJ) sharply condemned the invasion and expressed support for the current Czechoslovak leadership headed by Dubček. The Yugoslav ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Anton Vratuša, delivered a statement by his government denouncing the occupation of Czechoslovakia at a meeting of the Security Council. Immediately after the invasion, citizens spontaneously congregated in Yugoslav cities to display their opposition to the Soviet intervention, and on 22 August the authorities in Belgrade convened a demonstration in support of Czechoslovakia attended by a quarter of a million people.[3] Similar protests took place in other large cities all around Yugoslavia. The generous help offered to tens of thousands of Czechoslovak tourists who were caught by the occupation of their country on holiday in Yugoslavia stuck in particular in the Czech and Slovak historical memory. The aid was organised by both the Yugoslav authorities and by ordinary citizens who provided Czechoslovaks with shelter, foodstuffs and very necessary moral support.[4]

In Czechoslovakia, the story was thus born of 'fraternal' Yugoslavia. Characteristically, in March 1969 students in Prague and other cities protested after the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ), under Soviet pressure, refused to send a delegation to the IX Congress of the SKJ. According to the student newspaper *Studentské listy*: 'Yugoslavia has embarked on the path from bureaucratic to self-governing socialism. Even in our country, socialism cannot exist without democracy, and that is the path we also wanted to take in January 1968… It seems that the example of the Yugoslav route will now form a permanent part of our political arsenal'.[5] Almost nobody noticed that in reality the attitude of the Yugoslav leadership continued to be rather ambiguous towards the Czechoslovak reform effort. Despite public backing they pursued their own interests and had no intention of putting themselves at risk for the sake of another country.[6]

Needless to say, the trope of Yugoslavia as a better, freer and more successful alternative to Soviet-style socialism remained an integral element of

the Czechoslovak political imagination during the normalisation period. In 1977, some signatories of Charter 77 even considered seeking asylum in Yugoslavia.[7] In the same year, Dubček addressed a letter to Tito in which he espoused his policy of nationally specific paths to socialism as a genuine legacy of the teachings of Marx and Lenin.[8] However, the Yugoslav example also played an equally significant role for opponents of the Prague Spring and adherents of normalisation. Conservative elements in the KSČ were irritated by Yugoslav public gestures of support for what they saw as the erroneous policy of Dubček's leadership. KSČ hard-liners were also convinced that without Moscow's timely intervention, Czechoslovakia would have ended up tilting towards Yugoslav-style 'revisionism'. Hence, the image of Yugoslavia as a different socialist country, and perceptions of its role in the Czechoslovak reform movement, became an important, if previously somewhat overlooked, feature of the post-1969 period.

This chapter will argue that contested narratives of 'fraternal Yugoslavia' helped in significant ways to shape the political and social reality of Czechoslovak normalisation. The image of another, better socialism persisted in society, while the extremely hostile position adopted by dogmatic ultra-conservative voices against 'revisionists' gradually transformed during the 1970s into a more open, though still suspicious attitude. By the late 1970s, ever broader segments of Czechoslovak society were able to utilise the regime's ambivalence towards the Yugoslav system to develop broad and rich contacts with that country. From the mid-1980s, elements in the KSČ leadership even began drawing on the Yugoslav political and economic model when formulating their own plans for 'reconstruction' (*přestavba*) as a Czechoslovak variant of *perestroika*. In the end, though, the regime collapsed before it had time to put any of these ideas into practice.

'Fraternal Yugoslavia' and Normalisation Dilemmas in Czechoslovakia

The positive images of Yugoslavia among Dubček's supporters in Czechoslovakia in 1968–1969 did not appear suddenly but had strong historical roots. These can be traced back to pan-Slavic ideas in the late nineteenth century, to the anti-revisionist stance that both newly-created countries took in the aftermath of the Paris Peace Settlement of 1919–1920,

and to their joint membership, alongside Romania, in the 'Little Entente' of the inter-war period.[9] In the early to mid-1940s Czechoslovak anti-fascists were deeply impressed by the commitment of Tito's Partisans to armed resistance against German and Italian occupiers and to punishment of domestic 'collaborators'. Both countries emerged from the Second World War with a very positive view of the USSR as the principal guarantor of peace and security in Europe, and as a model of state socialism.

True, the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in June 1948 meant that relations were necessarily put on ice for several years. In particular, the Czechoslovak communist regime participated fervently in the anti-Tito witch hunts that took place across the Soviet bloc in 1949–1952. However, even this very negative phase in Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations did not last much beyond the mid-1950s. After Khrushchev's visit to Belgrade in 1955, Soviet bloc states were encouraged to establish contacts with Yugoslavia as if it were an ordinary socialist country. Reluctantly, the hard-line Czechoslovak leadership under Antonín Novotný had to comply with this approach. The early 1960s saw a huge and rapid development of interest in Yugoslavia and the establishment of contacts in various spheres of scientific, cultural and social life. Yugoslavia aroused curiosity. Economists studied its industry, social scientists were interested in its experience with self-governing principles, and the system of workers' councils in socialist enterprises attracted attention.[10] Marxist philosophers were inspired by the works of their Yugoslav colleagues round the journal *Praxis* and collaborated with them.[11] Every year, a large number of translations of works by Yugoslav writers was published,[12] while Yugoslav cinematography was also appreciated due to its perceived combination of Marxism with artistic freedom. Not just in 1968, then, but in the years leading up to the Prague Spring, Yugoslavia was a source of inspiration for those Czechoslovaks looking for a model on which to base their own aspirations for a reformed socialism.

For this reason alone, the question of future Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations posed a huge dilemma for the incoming Husák regime after April 1969. Uncertainty was also caused by contradictory messages coming from Moscow, some of which suggested that Brezhnev wanted to avoid another Soviet-Yugoslav split in the aftermath of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, and some of which still presented 'Titoism' as a major ideological threat to the unity of the socialist bloc. On top of this, Husák had to keep an eye on ultra-conservatives and anti-revisionists in the state security service (StB), many of whom appeared to want a return to the

early 1950s when Tito was cast as enemy number one, a traitor and 'agent of imperialism' in every sense of the word.

The more pragmatic part of the normalisation establishment had to reckon with the influence of ultra-conservative circles,[13] but it also knew that a sharp anti-Yugoslav course would be unconvincing for the majority of the population, including most party members. This was reflected, inter alia, in the withdrawal from circulation of a book by one of the leading figures in this movement, Rudolf Černý's *Jak se dělá kontrarevoluce* ['How to Make a Counter-Revolution'], issued in 1970.[14] The book contained several explicit references to the 'negative' influence of Yugoslavia before and during the Prague Spring, and argued that Tito had conspired with capitalist states to bring about the disintegration of socialism in Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the founding document of normalisation, *Poučení z krizového vývoje* ['Lessons from the Crisis Development'], published in December 1970, attacked 'revisionism', but no longer contained any direct references to Yugoslavia. The only exception was a condemnation of the alleged attempt by four former Czechoslovak government ministers from the Dubček era—Ota Šik, Jiří Hájek, František Vlasák and Štefan Gašparík—to establish a base for a future government in exile in Belgrade during the August 1968 invasion. However, Yugoslavia itself was no longer blamed for this incident.[15]

Indeed, over the course of the 1970s the sharp anti-Yugoslav tendency in Czechoslovakia evident at the beginning of normalisation gradually weakened. The Soviet Union indicated to Husák's leadership that it wanted the ČSSR to adapt to the unified strategy of the socialist camp and to bring a more moderate tone to its relations with Yugoslavia. Husák and other KSČ leaders were themselves wise to the fact that now that Czechoslovakia had established the foundations of a normalised regime, the maintenance of a long-standing conflict with Yugoslavia was not in line with Moscow's broader vision for Eastern Europe.

This line of thinking played into the hands of realists and technocrats in the KSČ, who understood that political and ideological tensions were inconsistent with the country's economic interests. In the second half of the 1960s, Yugoslavia had become one of the ČSSR's most significant trading partners. At the beginning of the 1970s, it still ranked fifth or sixth in the list of Czechoslovakia's most important foreign commercial partners, placing it above even some of the countries in the Soviet bloc. In particular, it represented an essential market for machinery, which was Czechoslovakia's traditionally dominant export sector. At the same time,

Czechoslovak goods travelled to countries outside of Europe through Yugoslav ports, making good relations with Belgrade a vital part of the ČSSR's trade policy. Representatives of Czechoslovak industry also had high hopes that cooperation with Yugoslav companies would give them access to technological innovations that the Yugoslavs had at their disposal in the form of Western licenses.

Czechoslovak enterprises involved in foreign trade also wanted to exploit the advantageous political position enjoyed by non-aligned Yugoslavia in developing countries to secure new contracts.[16] Closer to home, Yugoslav building companies were involved in the construction of flats, industrial facilities and infrastructure in Czechoslovakia. From the second half of the 1960s, an agreement on the employment of Yugoslav labourers was being prepared. Czechoslovakia had long suffered from a shortage of manual labour, which significantly hampered the prospects for economic growth,[17] as Ondřej Klípa shows in his contribution to this volume. Finally, trade with Yugoslavia had its place in the general strategy of increasing the productivity of the Czechoslovak economy and thus the wealth of the population. Indeed, higher living standards were considered by representatives of the Husák regime to be critical to the success of normalisation.

Fortunately, despite the crisis in political relations at the turn of the 1970s, Yugoslavia was likewise interested in developing economic cooperation. Negotiations between economic representatives of the two states actually took place without interruption even at the time of the freezing of contacts at the political level.[18] That said, Czechoslovak 'realists' had an immediate political reason for improving relations with Yugoslavia. Recognition by Tito of the normalisation regime would be an important boost for the post-Dubček leadership and a means of neutralising sceptical voices at home, both those on the ultra-left and those on the party's right. Husák and his colleagues insisted that the Yugoslavs, despite their fundamentally negative attitude to the 1968 invasion, would soon come to acknowledge that the 'normalisers' had won, in other words that they had succeeded in saving socialism, consolidating the party's leadership and ensuring rising living standards for the working people. This was not just a question of political calculation. Husák, Prime Minister Lubomír Štrougal and even the dogmatic Vasil Biľak had a certain admiration for the Yugoslav communists and especially for Tito personally. They recognised him as a war hero and a great statesman who had notched up extraordinary successes when compared to other communist leaders. They

appreciated that his country, a poor agrarian state on the periphery of Europe before the Second World War, had secured international prestige and, despite all its internal problems, unprecedented economic and social progress. As a one-time victim of false accusations and Stalinist purges, Husák undoubtedly also had his own reasons for wanting to avoid a repeat of the fervent anti-Tito campaigns of the late 1940s and early 1950s.[19]

Is Tito Ours? Cooperation with Yugoslavia for the Benefit of the Socialist Camp

The approach of the Czechoslovak political elite to Yugoslavia during the period of consolidation of the normalisation regime was also marked by the events that took place in Tito's Yugoslav socialist federation in 1971 and 1972. In Croatia, long-running social tensions culminated in a mass protest movement, headed by senior functionaries in the republic's League of Communists, demanding liberalisation and greater national autonomy. The phenomenon, which later became known as the 'Mass Movement', abbreviated as *Maspok* (*Masovni pokret*), seemed to have some of the same features as the Prague Spring. Only many years later did its former protagonists begin to prefer the term 'Croatian Spring' to the designation *Maspok*, which acquired a pejorative meaning, so that the parallel with Czechoslovakia was all the more obvious.[20] When the movement began to take a supposedly chauvinistic and separatist direction in 1971, Tito resolved to take action against it. After the riots were suppressed, the League of Communists in Croatia, as well as other political, cultural and economic organisations, was purged. Trials followed and several prominent activists were imprisoned.

Czechoslovak leaders, like their Soviet counterparts, praised Tito's ability to deal with the protest movement. They acknowledged that, as a result of these events he had removed liberal and pro-Western Croat functionaries. In Czechoslovak discussions, the phrase 'normalisation of conditions in Yugoslavia' entered the political lexicon. Czechoslovak diplomats and journalists, for instance, commented positively in internal reports for the KSČ leadership on a similar reckoning with 'right-wing elements' in Slovenia and Serbia in 1972.[21] The suppression of *Maspok*, as well as the expulsion of reform-oriented politicians from the SKJ leadership, led to the return of a more authoritarian style of government in Yugoslavia in the early 1970s. The remnants of radical and ultra-left tendencies, which

manifested themselves most intensively in 1968, were also suppressed.[22] Moreover, in times of crisis Tito did not hesitate to threaten more moderate members of the leadership that the Soviet Union might intervene at any time if socialism in Yugoslavia was endangered.[23] In the Czechoslovak press, Tito was praised in such a way as to give the reader the impression that Yugoslavia, under his leadership, was now battling with the same problems that the KSČ, led by Husák, had successfully dealt with since 1969.[24]

The transition from a defensive to a more offensive and confident attitude among Czechoslovak 'realists' towards relations with Yugoslavia was accompanied by a shift in Soviet policy following Brezhnev's visit to Belgrade in September 1971. Tito's reckoning with nationalists and liberals led Moscow to realise that the SKJ leader continued to be the only reliable guarantor of the Marxist-Leninist character of the Yugoslav regime and its links to the socialist camp. Closer ties were also needed to ensure that whoever eventually succeeded Tito as Yugoslav leader would stick to a reasonably Soviet-friendly course. In autumn 1971, a new Kremlin strategy thus emerged. The USSR acquainted its satellites with the new line and instructed them to follow it in their relations with Yugoslavia too. In December 1971, with this intention in mind the collegium of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved the *New Concept in Policy towards the SFRY*.[25] This document emphasised the need to actively help pro-Soviet forces in Yugoslavia, but at the same time to avoid hasty steps and open condemnations of conditions there. Czechoslovakia was to consistently coordinate its action with its allies and consult on important issues with its 'Soviet friends'. The aim of this strategy was gradually to bring Czechoslovak relations with Yugoslavia into line with those enjoyed by the Kremlin.

The problem with the new policy was that it was based on unrealistic desires and ideological clichés. On the one hand, it relied on the supposed sympathy that the USSR was held to enjoy with key sections of the Yugoslav population: the working class, army officers and partisan veterans; as well as on (mis-)interpretations of radical leftist tendencies among Yugoslav university students as a manifestation of affection for the Soviet model of socialism.[26] On the other hand, Soviet leaders and Czechoslovak normalisers underestimated the extent of Yugoslavia's connections with, and reliance on, the Western world. This led them to an overly optimistic view of the chances of alleged pro-Soviet elements taking over following Tito's departure from office.

Instructions issued by the KSČ to the Czechoslovak press in autumn 1972 shed further light on the optimism in Prague at that time about the future of ties with Yugoslavia. In the interest of correct relations, the Czechoslovak media should report on Yugoslavia exclusively on the basis of information from published Yugoslav sources.[27] This policy remained in force into the 1980s. Negative developments in Yugoslavia were acknowledged, but only in so far as they could be gleaned from the Yugoslav media itself. Positive phenomena were generally ignored. The overall impression given was that Yugoslavia faced major internal problems that the Tito leadership was aware of but was unable to deal with. Reading between the lines, Czechoslovak citizens were supposed to understand that the reason for these difficulties was deviation from Soviet-style state socialism. A further message was that normalisation in Czechoslovakia, by defeating right-wing forces, had succeeded in removing the dangers that Yugoslavia still faced, namely unemployment, social inequality, foreign debt, rural backwardness and regional inequality. But this was not intended to imply that the ČSSR should turn its back on Yugoslavia. On the contrary, the task of Czechoslovakia and other Soviet bloc countries was to lend a helping hand to those real and sincere Yugoslav communists who could see the advantages of the Soviet system and, through intensive cooperation, wished to bring their country back to the right path.

Socialist Friendship

In summer and autumn 1973, relations between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia were reset, and did not change much for the next fifteen years. Husák visited Belgrade in September 1973,[28] and expressed personal satisfaction with his reception there,[29] but in spite of pressure from the Czechoslovak side, Tito did not pay a return trip to Prague. The Yugoslav leader was certainly aware of the ongoing symbolic value of his pre-invasion visit on 9–10 August 1968, not only among the Czechoslovak public, but also within non-aligned leftist and reform communist movements in Western Europe and further afield. He had no desire to tarnish the memory of that moment in the autumn of his life.[30] Apart from this, the two states did not really have any specific disputes after 1973. Nevertheless, minor issues arose on a regular basis. Both sides criticised the other's 'unfriendly' media reporting. The Czechoslovaks were alarmed by reminders of the Warsaw Pact invasion and positive portrayals of the Dubček era in the Yugoslav press.[31] They also complained whenever the

work of an exiled or opposition Czechoslovak author appeared in Yugoslavia. On occasion, Yugoslavia was willing to comply with Czechoslovak pressure. In 1975, at the last minute, Belgrade television withdrew from its schedule the film by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, *Death Is Called Engelchen*, based on a novel by the exiled Slovak writer Ladislav Mňačko.[32]

Bigger tensions were caused by the issue of pro-Soviet Yugoslav exiles (known as 'Cominformists') living in the ČSSR. Among the former opponents of Tito and supporters of the Cominform decision in 1948 who had found asylum in Czechoslovakia at the beginning of the 1950s, several tried to resume their political activity after 1968. They joined forces with like-minded Yugoslav exile circles in the USSR and other socialist countries. They also maintained conspiratorial contacts with emissaries coming from Yugoslavia. Members of the Prague 'Cominformist' circle wrote anti-Tito leaflets, which they then mailed to addresses in Yugoslavia.[33] Yugoslav officials strongly urged Husák's leadership to halt this activity. But although 'Cominformist' circles were closely monitored by the StB, it took several years to meet the Yugoslav requirement. There was clear sympathy for these emigrants in the normalisation establishment, and the StB never used repressive measures against them. Instead, security personnel patiently sought to discourage emigrants from conducting activities that might complicate Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations and were not in line with the USSR's policy.[34]

After Husák's visit to Belgrade in September 1973, ministers and senior party functionaries of both countries held frequent meetings to discuss economic issues. On the Czechoslovak side, those who most often took part in such negotiations were Prime Minister Štrougal, Foreign Minister Bohuslav Chňoupek, Vasil Biľak, responsible for party international relations, and Josef Kempný, who in 1974 led the KSČ delegation to the 10th SKJ Congress. Husák regularly received Yugoslav delegations as General Secretary and, from 1975, as President of the Republic, thus expressing his extraordinary personal interest in good relations. Štrougal's strategy in the mid-1970s was to stress that he and Husák were indispensable negotiating partners, and that without them the Yugoslavs would face having to deal with the hard-core dogmatists in the normalisation regime. This was an argument he used, for instance, when making complaints about the Yugoslav press.[35] In the 1980s, however, he shifted towards a more friendly and intimate position, openly expressing his contempt for the USSR and giving voice to his dissatisfaction with the political restrictions that

hindered industrial development and modernisation of the Czechoslovak economy.

In 1987, for example, in a meeting with Ante Marković, the future federal prime minister of Yugoslavia, Štrougal stated that whereas Yugoslavia was open to the world, Czechoslovakia remained isolated and this was the cause of its current problems.[36] A year later, in a conversation with his Yugoslav counterpart, Štrougal documented the current decline of his country by stating that Czechoslovakia was one of the ten most developed states before the war, but was now languishing in the top thirty.[37] Štrougal and other like-minded officials even seemed to suggest that, despite the political limits set by its membership of Comecon and the Warsaw Pact, Czechoslovakia was closer to Yugoslavia than to any other European socialist country.[38] Of course, we do not know for sure whether this was simply a tactic balanced by the sharper approach of Biľak and other conservatives. However, Štrougal's more open manner in the 1980s suggests that the technocratic-realistic wing of the KSČ was indeed striving for a closer form of relations and wished the Yugoslavs to perceive them as pragmatic-minded politicians who did what was possible in terms of reform, albeit within the constraints of the day. On the other hand, beyond the spheres of rhetoric and accent, the politics of so-called realists and dogmatists did not differ in principle on specific issues.

The situation was different in Bratislava, where Yugoslav representatives met with a consistently warm, indeed almost fraternal reception from the first half of the 1970s. The ideological and political pressures of normalisation were less severe here than they were in Prague. The Slovaks were thus able to make it known to the Yugoslavs that they wanted friendly relations on the basis of their respect for the Tito regime, and especially for its political-territorial solution to the nationalities question. This was also related to the Slovaks' pride in their own newly-emerging statehood following Czechoslovak federalisation in January 1969, and their desire to assert a presence as quasi-autonomous actors on the European stage.[39]

Window to the West

The change in course in the early 1970s and the willingness on both sides to cooperate also allowed Czechoslovak citizens to establish intensive contacts with Yugoslavia. One aspect of this was a loosening of post-1968 restrictions on tourism to Yugoslav sea resorts. After dropping steeply in the early 1970s, the number of trips rose steadily from 1973. In the

second half of the 1970s, it reached 300,000 a year and had exceeded half a million by the turn of the 1980s. A highpoint was reached in 1985, when almost 900,000 Czechoslovaks took holidays on the Adriatic coast.[40] KSČ 'realists' justified the loosening of restrictions on tourism with the argument that Czechoslovak holiday-makers in Yugoslavia would help balance the influence of visitors from Western countries. The mass influx of Czechoslovak tourists into Yugoslavia was also supposed to create the impression that under 'real existing socialism', summer holidays by the sea were now affordable to broad sections of the population.

This argument had a certain plausibility. In the 1980s, Czechoslovaks were among the most numerous foreign tourists in Yugoslavia, lagging behind only West Germans, Italians, Austrians, British and French.[41] Furthermore, in most years they spent more days in this country than visitors from all the other socialist countries combined. Even for Yugoslavs, holidays to their own coastal resorts were a luxury that the poorest sections of the population could not afford.[42] On the other hand, Czechoslovak tourists spent money on a far more modest scale than their Western counterparts. Among other things, Czechoslovak internal reports worried that the austere approach to holidaying taken by many of their citizens was leaving a negative impression on the local Yugoslav population.[43] The wealthier British and West German tourists were more likely to arouse the envy of the locals.

The point for Czechoslovak sun-lovers, however, was that Yugoslavia was a much easier country to travel to than Western capitalist states, various cumbersome bureaucratic procedures notwithstanding.[44] It was also a country where it was possible to see a reflection of Western consumer lifestyles and culture.[45] On holiday in 'Yugoshka', as the country was popularly known in the normalisation era, they encountered attractive Western goods, or their relatively successful Yugoslav imitations. Among the most coveted items were fashionable clothing, iconic Western food and drink brands, Western rock and popular music, and picture magazines and comics. For Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavia became, figuratively speaking, a window to the West, a means of experiencing a world which was otherwise mainly accessible to them remotely, via TV.

Each year in the 1970s hundreds of Czechoslovaks also used the tourist route to Yugoslavia as a means of leaving Czechoslovakia for good. In the 1980s, the annual figure rose to several thousand.[46] However, with few exceptions, Yugoslavia was not a destination for emigrants; rather, with its more loosely guarded borders, it was a stepping-stone to the West. Besides

which, Yugoslavia did not offer political asylum to refugees from Czechoslovakia. The only Czechs and Slovaks who settled permanently in Yugoslavia were the several thousand women who married Yugoslav men.[47] In most cases, they met their future husbands when the latter were working in Czechoslovakia on building contracts.

Post-1973, opportunities for closer contacts could also be found in the fields of science and culture. Every year in the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of Czechoslovak scientists, technicians or artists travelled to Yugoslavia through exchange programmes, with their Yugoslav colleagues visiting Czechoslovakia as well. Agreements on collaboration between universities, scientific institutes and the technical departments of large industrial enterprises were signed. The interest in collaboration was mostly mutual. However, from the Czechoslovak point of view, the possibility of business trips to and internships in Yugoslavia was a welcome opportunity to travel outside the Soviet bloc itself. Although, as with tourist trips, these excursions were subject to bureaucratic controls, it was usually easier to get to Yugoslavia than to Western countries. Tens of thousands of Czechoslovaks visited Yugoslavia for work each year.[48]

In the field of science, Yugoslavia was a welcome partner, since it provided Czechoslovak experts with access to new knowledge from the West, much of it otherwise difficult to obtain after 1969. The Yugoslavs in turn benefitted from the historically better organised research culture in Czechoslovakia. Fruitful collaboration took place in fields like agronomy, chemistry or nuclear physics.[49] Czechoslovak healthcare and medical science still had a very good reputation in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s, while the Czechoslovak side hoped to benefit from the relatively advanced level of Yugoslav pharmacology and medical technology, made possible by its contacts with the West.[50] In the field of medicine, collaboration was also aided by personal links. Thus the long-standing Minister of Health of the Czech Socialist Republic, Jaroslav Prokopec, a keen advocate of cooperation, had spent several years in Ljubljana as a young man and had a Slovene wife.[51] The cardiologist Libor Hejhal, a professor at Charles University in Prague, was another example.[52] As a member of the Czech minority in Yugoslavia, he had fought with Tito's Partisans in the Second World War.

Although partnerships in theatre, fine arts or classical music were also encouraged in principle, cultural relations between the two countries were subject to more rigorous political controls on the Czechoslovak side. Politically unreliable artists were usually prevented from taking part in

exchange programmes with Yugoslavia. For example, in 1974 the Czechoslovak authorities refused a Yugoslav invitation for the famous theatre director Otomar Krejča, who found himself in political disgrace because of his public support for the Prague Spring in 1968.[53] However, artists identified as ambivalent rather than absolutely hostile towards the normalisation regime faced fewer difficulties. In 1982, for instance, the film and theatre director Jiří Menzel established his reputation in Yugoslavia when he directed *Hamlet* at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival with Yugoslav actors.[54]

Particular problems appeared in the field of fine arts. The Yugoslavs were keen to exhibit examples of contemporary art in Czechoslovakia. The highly modern, colourful and mostly abstract works of Yugoslav painters were intended to advertise the liberal and progressive character of Yugoslav socialism in the eyes of the Czechoslovak public. The difference with the 'socialist realism' prevalent in the official art scene in the post-1969 Soviet bloc was clearly evident. In 1971, an exhibition of works by Petar Konjović, one of the most influential contemporary Yugoslav painters, was organised in Prague´s National Gallery.[55] However, thereafter Czechoslovak cultural officials insisted that only older works could be accepted. Hence, in 1975 the paintings of another famous Yugoslav representative of modern art, Petar Lubarda, were shown only in a collective exhibition of Montenegrin art of the first half of the twentieth century.[56] Bolder works by Lubarda from the 1960s and 1970s were not part of that display.

The Czechoslovak public associated Yugoslav culture predominantly with literature and film, which were present on a much larger scale than fine arts or music. Thanks to a very productive generation of translators who began their careers in the second half of the 1950s, Czech and Slovak became the languages into which the works of Yugoslav authors were most often translated.[57] The international success of the writer Ivo Andrić, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961, certainly contributed to the growing popularity of Yugoslav work in Czechoslovakia in the rest of that decade. However, Yugoslav novelists, poets and playwrights were also attractive to Czechoslovak audiences because of their courageous choice of topics and their willingness to adopt modern, experimental forms of writing.[58]

After the August occupation, Yugoslav literature took on even greater importance. Yugoslav writers, despite the more relaxed conditions in which they operated, used similar strategies to criticise the regime as their counterparts in Czechoslovakia and other countries of the socialist camp.

They cleverly incorporated into their works allegories and allusions, which their readers easily recognised. At the same time, dissident Yugoslav writers tackled the same broad issues that their Soviet-bloc counterparts did: authoritarian tendencies and practices of power, the split between official discourses and lived reality, and the failure to come to terms with the Stalinist past. In 1969, Meša Selimović's novel *Death and the Dervish* was a huge success among Czechoslovak readers. The story of a lonely individual battling authoritarian power, set in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Ottoman era, had obvious parallels with the present. Oriental despotism was depicted as a forerunner of the current regime.[59]

At the beginning of the normalisation era, official suspicions of Yugoslav ideological diversion were reflected in lower numbers of books printed, and by delays in pre-announced publications.[60] *The Dictionary of the Writers of Yugoslavia*, one of the key works of Czech Yugoslav studies, waited thirteen years for publication, as it could not be published before a similar lexicon devoted to Bulgarian literature.[61] Politically-motivated restrictions also affected Yugoslav film at the beginning of the normalisation period. In the second half of the 1960s, Yugoslav filmmaking found enthusiastic acceptance among Czechoslovak audiences.[62] As late as 1970, a film by the leading representative of the so-called Yugoslav black wave, Živojin Pavlović, titled *The Rats Awoke Us* (*Budjenje pacova*, 1967), was released for Czechoslovak distribution. Critics praised its portrayal of a dirty and dilapidated suburb of Belgrade, which bravely cast a light on Yugoslavia from the 'back door'.[63] In the next few years, however, the normalised Czechoslovak press no longer showed any sympathy with experimental and provocative Yugoslav filmmakers. A few articles in the film magazine *Kino* used quotes from official Yugoslav sources to register their satisfaction that the representatives of the black wave, Živojin Pavlović and Dušan Makavejev, were no longer in favour with the authorities in their homeland. Instead, they were now condemned for clinging to negativism and even to a 'new form of dogmatism'.[64] Of course, viewers in Czechoslovakia were not given the opportunity to form their own opinion about the 'crisis' in Yugoslav cinematography.

That said, a new interest in Yugoslav film was aroused in the Czechoslovak public by the emergence of a generation of Yugoslav directors belonging to the so-called Prague school, i.e., relatively recent graduates of the Prague Film Academy (FAMU), where they studied at the turn of the 1970s under Elmar Klos.[65] Czechoslovak viewers were first able to get acquainted with the work of the 'Prague graduates' in May 1979,

when, despite various deliberate obstacles from the Czechoslovak side,[66] a week-long festival of Yugoslav film finally took place in Prague and Bratislava. Five of the seven films screened came from the workshop of former FAMU students, Lordan Zafranović, Rajko Grlić, Goran Marković, Goran Paskaljević and Srdjan Karanović.[67]

The work of Zafranović, in particular his magnum opus *Occupation in 26 Pictures* (*Okupacija u 26 slika*, 1978), was a great success with Czechoslovak audiences. In its time, this film shocked with its explicit depiction of brutal violence. However, it also engraved itself on the consciousness of the Czechoslovak film community due to its unusual approach to the treatment of the Second World War.[68] Zafranović's films were impressive, disturbing and delivered a timeless humanistic message through the theme of war. They were exceptional in the context of ordinary filmmaking about the war as well as artistic testimony using lyrical, almost surreal images.[69] After watching *Occupation in 26 Pictures* at a gala evening on the occasion of the Yugoslav Film Festival in Bratislava in 1979, a group of unnamed Slovak directors apparently told their Yugoslav colleagues that they would also like to break free from some of the rigid frameworks imposed upon them when making war films.[70]

Some of the movies produced by the 'Prague pupils' paradoxically suited the unspoken strategy of Czechoslovak normalisers to point out the darker sides of the Yugoslav system.[71] Paskaljević's films *Beach Guard in Winter* (*Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu*, 1976) and *Twilight Time* (*Suton*, 1982), released in the ČSSR in 1986, dealt with Yugoslav unemployment, the harsh reality of having to seek work in the West, and the associated effects on the family life of the so-called *Gastarbeiter*.[72] However, if the intention of the guardians of Czechoslovak culture during the normalisation era was to discredit the Yugoslav system in the eyes of Czechoslovak audiences by permitting the distribution of such films, they were probably unsuccessful. Yugoslav films were certainly popular. However, this was more because they showcased the greater degree of freedom to criticise existing conditions in Yugoslavia than because they highlighted the supposed benefits of normalisation in post-1969 Czechoslovakia (full employment, higher living standards and so forth).

CONCLUSION

Despite the best efforts of the official Czechoslovak media, the image of Yugoslavia as offering an alternative, better model of socialism than that to be had in the Soviet bloc persisted under normalisation. Czechoslovaks appreciated that this socialist state allowed its citizens to travel to the West and granted them easier access to Western cultural products. Yugoslav socialism was also a freer, less authoritarian system for many Czechoslovaks. Last but not least, they admired its economic success, as manifested in the greater availability of consumer goods, the rapidly developing infrastructure and the aesthetically attractive construction of Yugoslav cities. To many in Czechoslovakia, it seemed that the once poor 'Balkan' country had, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, become a sovereign and internationally respected, but also dynamically developing state, which had made tremendous progress in a short time. The specific problems Yugoslavia itself had to face remained overlooked or under-estimated and were often dismissed as pro-Soviet propaganda. In comparison with Tito´s state, the record of the Husák regime seemed wanting. Yugoslavia's successes in the 1970s and 1980s posed the haunting question as to where Czechoslovakia might have been, had it been given the opportunity to choose freely, to develop its own 'path to socialism', and to carry out its reform programme in 1968. The independent, freer and 'almost western' Yugoslavia thus provided an important point of reference for Czechoslovaks when they sought to assess the state of their own country during the normalisation era.

The official relationship with Yugoslavia also became a benchmark for the relative strengths of ultra-conservative and realist positions in the Czechoslovak leadership. Both sides recognised the dangers of Tito's state as an alternative to the Soviet system and knew that the success or failure of the normalisation project would be measured in part against how well the Czechoslovak economy and Czechoslovak science and culture performed in comparison. The realists, however, had the advantage that their line was more in keeping with how the Kremlin wished relations with Yugoslavia to develop across the Soviet bloc after 1971. Ideological criticism was thus tempered by a large dose of pragmatism. And anyway, behind the disapproval, there was often a considerable degree of admiration and hidden envy.

During the Gorbachev era, the established patterns in normalisers' attitudes towards Yugoslavia started to crumble. The Czechoslovak

leadership was reluctant to imitate the reforms taking place in the Soviet Union, which seemed too radical and dangerous. Moreover, the similarities between *perestroika* and the Prague Spring threatened to completely undermine the legitimacy of the current political elite. Therefore, the Czechoslovaks, in formulating their own version of 'reconstruction' (*přestavba*), were more inclined to look to the already tried and tested Yugoslav model which maintained the Communist Party's power monopoly intact. This tendency can be seen most noticeably in the Act on State Enterprise, which came into force on 1 July 1988 and introduced principles of workers' self-management into the Czechoslovak economy. Now that Gorbachev had loosened Soviet control over the satellite states in Eastern Europe, Czechoslovaks felt able to offer the Yugoslavs a higher level of mutual cooperation. However, the Yugoslav side, now led by Marković as federal Prime Minister, showed little interest in the Czechoslovak initiatives, which anyway quickly faltered and were ultimately rendered irrelevant by the political events of late 1989.

After the 'Velvet Revolution' the situation was reversed as Czechoslovaks began to lose interest in Yugoslavia. There was a significant drop in the number of summer holidays on the Yugoslav coast, for instance. Instead Czechs and Slovaks were keen to take advantage of the newly acquired freedom to travel, and in summer 1990 hundreds of thousands headed for the beaches of Italy, Spain and other Western European countries. In addition, tourism was complicated by the economic measures of the Marković government between March 1989 and summer 1990, which made a stay in Yugoslavia significantly more expensive for foreign tourists. The magic of Yugoslavia as the Czechoslovak 'window to the West' had disappeared. When interest in Yugoslavia began to grow again in 1991, this was for completely different reasons. Against the background of civil war, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia, the dying state became a synonym for Balkan instability and ethnic tribalism. For the Central European Czechs and Slovaks, the 'Yugoslav myth' began to take on new forms.

Notes

1. 'Srdečně vítáme představitele jugoslávských komunistů', *Rudé právo*, 9 August 1968, p. 1; 'Josip Broz Tito v Praze', *Rudé právo*, 10 August 1968, p. 1.

2. 'Tisková konference Josipa Broze-Tita: Přeji čs. lidu mnoho úspěchů', *Rudé právo*, 11 August 1968, pp. 1 and 11.
3. J. Pelikán, *Jugoslávie a pražské jaro* (Prague, 2008), p. 174.
4. These events are strongly present in the historical memory of former Yugoslav countries and are commemorated from time to time in the media. However, they are yet to be the subject of serious scholarly research. See https://gkr.hr/Magazin/Teme/Revolucionarna-1968.-u-Rijeci-1-kako-su-cehoslovacki-turisti-zaglavili-u-Rijeci (last accessed 20 April 2021).
5. P. Hanzlík, 'Tito ano…', *Studentské listy*, vol. 69, no. 7, 9 April 1969, p. 4.
6. Pelikán, *Jugoslávie a pražské jaro*, pp. 245–95.
7. J. Pelikán and O. Vojtěchovský, 'Jugoslávie a československý disent v prvním desetiletí normalizace: Tematická edice dokumentů z bělehradských archivů', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. XXV, no. 3–4 (2018), pp. 582–611.
8. Ibid., pp. 607–11.
9. Z. Sládek. *Malá dohoda 1919–1938: její hospodářské, politické a vojenské komponenty* (Prague, 2000).
10. V. Sommer, 'The Knowledge that Crossed Boundaries: "Yugoslav Socialism" and the Czechoslovak Social Sciences from the 1950s to the 1980s', paper presented at the ASEEES 44th Annual Convention, New Orleans, 15–18 November 2012.
11. D. Rodin, 'Delegacija Jugoslavenskog udruženja za filozofiju u Čehoslovačkoj', *Praxis. Filozofski časopis. Jugoslovensko izdanje*, vol. 12 (1967), pp. 238–9.
12. Interview with Dušan Karpatský in S. Rubáš (ed.), *Slovo za slovem: S překladateli o překládání* (Prague, 2012), pp. 174–92.
13. K. McDermott and V. Sommer, 'The "Anti-Prague Spring": Neo-Stalinist and Ultra-Leftist Extremism in Czechoslovakia, 1968–1970', in K. McDermott and M. Stibbe (eds), *Eastern Europe in 1968*: *Responses to the Prague Spring and Warsaw Pact Invasion* (London, 2018), pp. 45–69; M. Černá, 'Ten boj si musíte vybojovat sami', *Soudobé dějiny*, vol. 3–4 (2018), pp. 400–32.
14. R. Černý, *Jak se dělá kontrarevoluce* (Prague, 1970), pp. 39, 101, 234, 239, 243, 306 and 325–6.
15. *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po XIII. sjezdu KSČ* (Prague, 1971), p. 20. The four ministers were on holiday in Yugoslavia in late August 1968 and spoke out publicly in defence of

their government. See also Pelikán, *Jugoslávie a pražské jaro*, pp. 191–214.

16. Národní archiv České republiky (National Archives of the Czech Republic, Prague, henceforth NA), fond ÚV KSČ, 02/1, sv. 143, ar. j. 221. 6.11.1970, b. 6, Zpráva o výsledcích VII. zasedání Československo-jugoslávského výboru pro hospodářskou a vědeckou spolupráci; ibid., fond Úřad předsednictva vlády - běžná spisovna (ÚPV). k. 105. sign. 201/55/7, Informace o činnosti konsorcia jugoslávských a čsl. bank, 10 November 1972; ibid., k. 172, sign. 201/257/8, r. 1975. Spolupráce SFRJ a ČSSR v chemickém průmyslu.

17. O. Vojtěchovský, 'Jugoslávští dělníci v normalizačním Československu: Východiska bádání', *Studia Balkanica Bohemo-Slovaca*, vol. VII (2017), pp. 473–87; O. Vojtěchovský, '"Na dočasné práci" v socialistické zemi. Jugoslávští dělníci v Československu od šedesátých do osmdesátých let 20. století', *Paměť a dějiny,* vol. 4 (2021), pp. 30–45.

18. NA, fond Úřad předsednictva vlády ČSSR, 1970, Zahraniční styky s Jugoslávií.

19. We have no reason to doubt that the Czechoslovak representatives were sincere in the words of respect for Tito that they expressed during negotiations with their Yugoslav counterparts. See, for instance, NA, fond ÚV KSČ, Gustav Husák, Jugoslávie, karton 1081, Složka 10431. Charakteristika, postavení a pohyb společenských sil v Jugoslávii, 1970.

20. M. Tripalo, *Hrvatsko proljeće* (Zagreb, 1990); T. Jakovina (ed.), *Hrvatsko proljeće 40 godina posle* (Zagreb, 2012).

21. NA, f. ÚV KSČ, Gustáv Husák, karton 1081, sl. 10434, Jugoslávie, 29 January 1971 Zpráva dopisovatele Rudého práva „K současné situaci v Jugoslávii"; Zdena Tučková, Informace zpravodajky ČTK z Bělehradu, 20 January 1972; Situační informace od bělehradského zpravodaje Rudého práva, 20 March 1972.

22. H. Klasić (ed.), *Jugoslavija i svijet 1968.* (Zagreb, 2012); R. Vučetić, *Monopol na istinu: partija, kultura i cenzura u Srbiji šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina XX veka* (Belgrade, 2016).

23. I. Banac, '"We Did Not Quarrel, We Did Not Curse": The Price of Yugoslav Independence After the Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia', in S. Rajak et al. (eds), *The Balkans in the Cold War* (London, 2017), pp. 173–96; J. Pirjevec, *Tito in tovariši* (Ljubljana, 2011), p. 506.

24. 'Projev jugoslávského prezidenta na zasedání SKJ: Tito o kontrarevolučních silách', *Rudé právo*, 4 December 1971, p. 7; 'Ze závěrečného projevu Josipa Broze-Tita na zasedání předsednictva SKJ. Revolučními činy proti kontrarevoluci', *Rudé právo*, 7 December 1971, p. 6. *Rudé právo* covered the situation in Croatia almost every day during December 1971.

25. Archiv ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Prague, AMZV), fond Teritoriální odbor Jugoslávie (TOJ), k. 2, podkladový materiál zpracovaný J. Hesem pro kolegium ministra zahraničí, prosinec 1971; zpráva J. Hese o plnění závěrů kolegia ministra zahraničních věcí v relaci se Socialistickou federativní republikou Jugoslávií z 20.9.1972.

26. NA, f. ÚV KSČ, Gustáv Husák, karton 1081, sl. 10434, sl. 10431, Jugoslávie. Charakteristika, postavení a pohyb společenských sil v Jugoslávii (Zpráva ZÚ), 1970.

27. Arhiv Ministarstva spoljnih poslova (Archive of the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgrade, henceforth AMSP), fond PA-1973, ČSSR, fasc. 23, Telegram, 10 April 1973.

28. NA, f. ÚV KSČ, Gustáv Husák, k. 368, podkladový materiál pro přípravu návštěvy G. Husáka v SFRJ, říjen 1973; Arhiv Jugoslavije (Archive of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, henceforth AJ), fond Kabinet predsednika republike 1953–1980 (KPR), I-3-a/19–22, Prepis stenografskih beležaka iz razgovora izmedju J. Broza Tita i G. Husaka, 23 and 26 October 1973.

29. AJ, f. KPR, I-3-a/19-22, Poseta generalnog sekretara KP Čehoslovače Gustava Husaka.

30. AMSP, f. PA-1979, ČSSR, fasc. 33, om. 18, Čs. platforma za predstojeću posetu Štrougala, 4 June 1979.

31. See, for example, reactions to the article series by Milan Hübl, published in the Yugoslav press in March 1978, in AMSP, f. PA-ČSSR, 1978, fasc. 31, om. 29.

32. AMSP, f. PA-1975, ČSSR, fasc. 25, om. 5, Informacija Saveznog sekretarijata za inostrane poslove za ambasadu SFRJ u Pragu, 5 June 1975.

33. O. Vojtěchovský, 'Aktivizace jugoslávských informbyrovců v Československu v důsledku krize roku 1968', *Slovanské historické studie*, vol. 32 (2007), pp. 149–65.

34. O. Vojtěchovský, 'Jugoslávská informbyrovská emigrace v Československu', PhD dissertation, Charles University, Prague, 2010, pp. 701–41.

35. AJ, fond 507 (CK SKJ), ČSSR, IX, 22/I–375, Beleška o razgovorima predsednika Saveznog izvršnog veća Džemala Bijedića sa čehoslovačkim predsednikom vlade Lubomirom Štrougalom, 9 December 1975.

36. Hrvatski državni arhiv (State Archive of Croatia, Zagreb, henceforth HDA), f. RKZOSI, k. 118, Beleška o poseti Ante Markovića u Slovačkoj, 24–28 February 1987.

37. AJ, f. 507, CK SKJ, IX, KZMOV, ČSSR, Beleška o prijemu L. Štrougala kod B. Krunića, 17 June 1988.

38. AMSP, f. PA-1980, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 15, 16 January 1980. Ambasada SFRJ Prag, Telegram br. 11 o razgovorima Cemović – Štrougal.

39. AMSP, f. PA-1981, ČSSR, fasc. 25, om. 12. Generalni konzulat SFRJ Bratislava, Informacija o razgovorima sa Peterom Colotkom, Jozefom Lenartom i Viliamom Šalgovičem, 26 August 1981.

40. Z. Šedivý, 'K východiskům a perspektivám dalšího vývoje ekonomických vztahů mezi ČSFR a Jugoslávií', *Ekonomická studie*, vol. 149 (1990), p. 9.

41. *Statistički godišnjak Jugoslavije*, 1975–1988.

42. H. Grandits and K. Taylor (eds), *Yugoslavia's Sunny Side: A History of Tourism in Socialism (1950s–1980s)* (Budapest, 2010).

43. J. Šoukal and S. Vančurová, 'Cestování Čechů na jihoslovanské pobřeží ve dvacátých letech 20. století', *Historická sociologie*, vol. 2 (2014), pp. 63–78.

44. J. Rychlík, *Cestování do ciziny v habsburské monarchii a v Československu: pasová, vízová a vystěhovalecká politika 1848–1989* (Prague, 2007), pp. 65–8 and 85–6.

45. See P. H. Patterson, 'Dangerous Liaisons: Soviet-Bloc Tourists and the Temptations of the Yugoslav Good Life in the 1960s and 1970s', in P. Scranton and J. F. Davidson (eds), *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007), pp. 186–212.

46. O. Vojtěchovský and J. Pelikán, 'A Bridge to the West: Yugoslavia as a Transit Country for Czechoslovak Emigrants from the 1960s to 1980s', *Střed/Centre: Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Vol. 2 (2019), pp. 61–86.

47. There are two Czech television documentaries on this, *Víno, ženy, Hvar* (2008) and *Český žurnál: Obnažený národ* (2014). However, they portray only Czech women who married Yugoslav (Croatian) men they had met while on holiday on the Yugoslav coast.

48. For example, in 1987, 36,000 Czechoslovak citizens took business trips to Yugoslavia. In the same year 64,000 Czechoslovaks travelled on business to Austria, and 80,000 Czechoslovak business trips were to Poland. See *Statistická ročenka ČSSR, 1987.*

49. AMSP, f. PA–1974, ČSSR, fasc. 26, om. 1, Informacija o XIX. zasedanju Mešovite jugoslovensko-čehoslovačke komisije za naučno-tehničku saradnju, 17–22 June 1974.

50. NA, f. Úřad předsednictva vlády - běžná spisovna. K. 224, signatura 776/1/13, r. 1973, Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ČSR. Zpráva o spolupráci MZ ČSR se SFRJ v oblasti zdravotnictví, 10 July 1973.

51. O. Vojtěchovský, *Z Prahy proti Titovi! jugoslávská prosovětská emigrace v Československu* (Karlovy Vary, 2012), p. 422.

52. Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Security Services Archive, Prague, ABS), OB 1167/3 SADY. 126, 16.4.1971, II. S FMV, 2. odbor, 1. odd., Mjr. Ježek. Informace.

53. AMSP, f. PA-1974, ČSSR, fasc. 26, om. 2, Ambasador Ljubo Babić, Informacija, 28 February 1974.

54. See https://www.vecernji.hr/kultura/bio-je-simbol-ceske-umjetnosti-i-istinski-prijatelj-hrvatske-1429773 (last accessed 13 April 2021).

55. *Milan Konjović: obrazy z let 1929–1972* (Prague, 1973). Profily a přehledy Nár. galerie v Praze; sv. 19.

56. *Umění Černé Hory první poloviny dvacátého století.* Praha, 18.2.–6.4.1975 (Prague, 1975).

57. Between 1945 and 1980, 412 Yugoslav literary works were published in Czech and Slovak translations. The Soviet Union was in second place with 372 translations of Yugoslav works into Russian and other Soviet languages. The third position was occupied by German translations published in West Germany, the GDR and Austria. See S. Selinić, *Književna diplomatija: Medjunarodna saradnja jugoslovenskih pisaca od sredine pedesetih do kraja sedamdesetih godina 20. veka* (Belgrade, 2019), p. 331.

58. See the interview with Dušan Karpatský in Rubáš (ed.), *Slovo za slovem*, pp. 174–92.

59. M. Selimović, *Derviš a smrt* (Prague, 1969), translated into Slovak as *Derviš a smrť* (Bratislava, 1971). The Yugoslav film from 1974, based on the novel, was screened in Czechoslovak cinemas in 1975. For the reception of the novel in Czechoslovakia, see D. Karpatský, *Listář* (Prague, 2014), p. 272.

60. Interview with translator Milada Černá regarding translations of the novels of Momo Kapor, 25 March 2017. On translations of Miodrag Bulatović's works, see Karpatský, *Listář*, pp. 85–7 and 219–20.

61. Interview with Irena Wenigová, then editor in chief of the publishing house Odeon, 26 April 2017. See also AMSP, f. PA-1979, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 7, 6 June 1979; ibid., f. PA-1980, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 7 and 9; *Slovník spisovatelů: Bulharsko* (Prague, 1978); *Slovník spisovatelů: Jugoslávie* (Prague, 1979).

62. M. Barešová, 'Křehké socialistické přátelství: Československo-jugoslávské vztahy v kinematografii', PhD disseration, Masaryk University, Brno, 2019.

63. *Kino*, vol. 3, 5 February 1970, p. 6, M. Fiala: Probouzení krys. *Kino*, 22 January 1970, č. 25, pp. 4–5.

64. *Kino*, 20 January 1970, č. 2, p. 15. Záběr zblízka. Jugoslávský film; *Kino*, 28 September 1972, č. 20, s. 14. Záběr z blízka. Jugoslávský film.

65. M. Barešová, c. d., s. 7–9; G. Marković, *Česká škola neexistuje* (Prague, 2020); E. Kusturica, *Kde jsem v tom příběhu já* (Prague, 2012); R. Grlić, *Neispričane priče* (Zagreb, 2018).

66. AMSP, f. PA-1979, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 6, Ambasada SFRJ Prag, Informacija br. 177, 15 April 1979.

67. *Kino*, 26 June 1979, č. 13, Milica Zadražilová: Bravo maestro. Rajko Grlić znovu v Praze; AMSP, f. PA-1979, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 6, Ambasada SFRJ Prag, Informacija br. 204, 5 June 1979 and Generalni konzulat SFRJ Bratislava, Informacija br. 33, 29 May 1979.

68. *Kino*, 29 January 1980, č. 2, s. 6–7, Milica Zdražilová: Válka jako metafora zla.

69. On audience responses, see *Kino*, 2 April 1985, č. 7, p. 15. Dopisy čtenářů.

70. AMSP, f. PA-1979, ČSSR, fasc. 32, om. 6, Generalni konzulat SFRJ Bratislava, Informacija br. 33, 29 May 1979.

71. Ibid., om. 1, Mesečni izveštaj o štampi i televiziji, December 1979.

72. For the response to Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* films in the Czechoslovak film magazine *Kino*, see M. Zdražilová, 'Nesplněný sen o štěstí', 30 September 1986, č. 20. p. 4.

Index[1]

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.